STREAKS OF LIFE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

IMPRESSIONS THAT REMAINED. Memoirs. In Two Volumes. With Illustrations. 8vo.

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Photo. Jobst.

ETHEL SMYTH, MUS. DOC.

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BY

ETHEL SMYTH
MUS. DOC.
AUTHOR OF 'IMPRESSIONS THAT REMAINED'

WITH A PORTRAIT

Second Impression

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Concerning this Book	1
Recollections of the Empress Eugénie	4
A Fresh Start and Two Portraits	69
Two Glimpses of Queen Victoria	93
'Mount Music'	112
An Adventure in a Train	119
The Quotation-Fiend	134
A Winter of Storm	139
The Opera Fiasco	206
An Open Secret	231

STREAKS OF LIFE

CONCERNING THIS BOOK

I CALL this collection of papers 'Streaks of Life' because although most of them are autobiographical there is no attempt at a connected story. Dealing with modern times, continuity is impossible unless you are prepared either to hurt feelings, or to dip your pen in purest solution of rose-coloured amiability. And without wishing to incur the imputation of treachery, I can imagine nothing more tiresome than always to speak of people as if they were listening at the door.

I should like to say a word about one or two articles of a different class that appear in this volume—the review of 'Mount Music,' for instance, which is included because I think no modern book gives such a faithful picture of Ireland. True, it is the Ireland of yesterday—of the very end, that is, of last century—but what a masterly analysis of the soil in which Sinn Fein has struck root! As our two islands are irrevocably bound together, the more we know of the other island the better, particularly since we need not expect to be studied and understood ourselves. We have to be, *we must be*, intelligent and sympathetic enough for two, and if anyone can help us to this

admirable state of mind it is E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross.

As for the two articles dealing with musical topics, the first, 'The Opera Fiasco,' was written before the disappearance from the operatic scene (only for a while, we hope) of Sir Thomas Beecham. I want to say that although obliged elsewhere to criticise his methods and in some ways deprecate his influence, the feelings of gratitude, indebtedness, and, if I may say so, affection there expressed remain unaltered.

When Goethe was endeavouring to teach his young friend Eckermann to see, he began by showing him none but the choicest engravings of supreme masterpieces. 'Thus alone can *taste* be acquired,' he said, 'after which you are fit to deal adequately with the second-best, neither over- nor under-rating it. *But there must be a standard of reference to start with.*'

The creation of this standard is one of the duties the State owes to the nation, or rather the nation to itself, for who but we ourselves have created, under enlightened guidance, our great art collections? But this principle, as I show in both my musical articles, is not acknowledged in music—with consequences that are dealt with in detail in 'The Opera Fiasco.' The arguments there used are unanswerable, and will have as much effect as a puff of smoke! I know my England—what she really cares about, and what she considers it necessary to her self-respect to *pretend* to care about.

As for the part of 'An Open Secret' that refers to women, if I had time and strength I would travel all England holding up the mirror to those who are still at the stage of King Canute's courtiers, and believe that a far more irresistible tide than the one he used as text can be arrested by the action of Trades Unions. None

but bread-winners know the cruelty of that action; Dr. Flora Murray's wonderful book 'Women as Army Surgeons' dispels the illusion that the medical fight is won; the male medical students at University College are now trying to squash female competition; the Hallé Orchestra has sacked its women members, *none of whom replaced fighting men*, and so on. In the same article I quote Sir Henry Wood's recent remarks about women in orchestras. But without that I know, and we all know, that the root of the matter is selfishness and fear; 'ca' canny'—a system which would drive women crazy—*versus* what Mr. Chesterton calls 'the terrible conscientiousness of women.'

That amiable philosopher used to soothe harassed wage-earners by calling them 'uncrowned Queens,' and entreating them, as such, to keep out of the labour market. Some day there may be Doles for Uncrowned Queens. It will be charming. But at present we need all the hard workers we can get, and I fancy England will not cut off her nose by way of improving her face.

Women must stand firm against tyranny, and not meet it with any description of smile—whether hypocritical, philosophical, or diplomatic. Meanwhile, to show there is no ill-feeling, let us borrow the finest of battle-cries—a cry brave men have given us:

'Are we downhearted? . . . NO!'

COIGN. *December* 1920.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

'. . . celle à qui Dieu donna tant de choses, et à qui il enleva, un par un, tout ce qu'il avait donné . . . !'

From a letter written by the Empress to M. Pietri,
Maritzburg, 3rd May, 1880.

I

STRANGE that the death of a woman of ninety-five should seem to those who knew her the one incredible thing. Yet this, I am certain, was the feeling with which, on July 12, hundreds of people read the news that the Empress Eugénie's long life had come to a close. There seemed no reason why she should not live on indefinitely—nor any for wishing it might be otherwise, since the one shadow that darkened her later years (though she herself never believed it could not be dissipated), the dread of total blindness, had passed away.

There are two conditions, I think, which determine fitness to survive : your own interest in life must be unimpaired, and further, you must possess the certainty that your company is still eagerly desired by your friends. Such was more emphatically the Empress's case, surely, than that of other mortals who have reached so great an age. One felt convinced, too, that as she had been, so she would be to the end ; that there would be no gradual failing—no sad period of death in life, which is the fate one most dreads for the old.

And so it turned out. Well in health, back in Spain again, after years of absence, and among her own people ; her sight painlessly and, as it seemed, miracu-

lously restored ; congratulating herself on having faced an operation that if painless was formidable ; glorying in the fact that it was a Spanish doctor who invented the method, behold her one day walking in her nephew's garden, discussing the details of her imminent return to England—and the next, after a few hours of pain and distress, sinking gently into death. As one who loved and was beloved by her has told me, 'her heart gradually ceased to beat, as it might be a little bird that dies in your hand.'

Such was her end ; and who shall say it was not the happiest one could wish for her ?

In the following pages no attempt will be made to speak of the Empress as historical personage, unless incidentally, when recording things she said that struck one so much that they found their way into private letters, or into a diary which, alas ! was only started in 1917. This is merely a record written by one who saw her constantly, travelled with her, stayed in her houses, lived practically next door to her for more than thirty years, and who eagerly sought her company because, quite apart from her story, she was one of the most interesting, original, remarkable, and delightful people in the world.

In order to show what my claims may be to speak, I will say, briefly, how I came to know her.

When she came to live at Farnborough Hill after the Prince Imperial's death, my parents were among the neighbours occasionally invited to tea or dinner ; and my mother's French upbringing, which included an easy command of the language, was a point in her favour in a house where no one but its mistress had any English. In those days the Empress had more or less of a household : the old Duc de Bassano ; Madame le Breton—once *Lectrice*, now *Dame d'Honneur*, sole companion of the flight to England in 1870 ; and

Monsieur Pietri, the Empress's secretary, who was one of the few people connected with her in the old days of whose deep personal devotion there could be no doubt. And besides one or two daughters of ancient officials of the Imperial Court, who occasionally took a spell of honorary service, there were later attempts at a resident *Demoiselle d'Honneur*. But these were not successes, as will be recounted in due course, and the idea was soon abandoned; particularly as the Empress went nowhere except on occasional visits to Queen Victoria, and at such times was attended by Madame Arcos who was a *persona grata* at Court.

The first time I saw Her Majesty was in the year 1883—the time when, as I have related elsewhere,[1] the Duchesse de Mouchy remarked that in a certain sense she was even more beautiful now than in her youth; and certainly that beauty surpassed one's extremest expectations. Not more than 5 feet 5 inches, I fancy, the perfection of her proportions gave the idea of a far taller woman, and any one interested in motion must at once have been struck by her walk. Less like walking than gliding, it was the easiest, most graceful style of progression imaginable. The face was very pale, and except as to the eyebrows not in the least made up (no powder, no rouge); and under the large hat you caught sight of her hair—grey, inclining to white. It was not till some years later that I saw her bare-headed, but to the end she never changed her *coiffure*. She detested caps and never wore them, and, as the years went on, the flat curls and other additions she permitted herself, faithfully turned white with her own strong, plentiful hair. I always thought the whole head-arrangement a triumph of genius—absolutely suitable to her age, yet not hiding the shape of that exquisitely poised little head.

[1] *Impressions that Remained.* (Longmans.)

The occasion I am speaking of, when I first came into personal contact with her, was a meet of the harriers, which took place, at her special request, at Farnborough Hill. She came out on to the gravel sweep in front of the house, and her manner was more gracious and winning than any manner I had ever seen as she bowed right and left to the awestruck field, saying repeatedly, 'Put on your 'ats; I pray you, put on your 'ats.' The Master was then presented, and she really and truly did remark to him—as, if you come to think of it, she naturally would—'I 'ope the 'ounds will find the 'are near the 'ouse,'—all of which was my first intimation of a fact which surprised me in later years, her lack of gift for languages; for well I knew that her education had included a prolonged sojourn at a boarding-school at Clifton.

In due course I and my sisters were presented, and instantly were lifted into the seventh heaven by the warmth of our reception, for even then she had the delight in young people that became such a marked characteristic in after years. A little later my mother was bidden to tea, and thus began the relation that was one of the great joys and burning interests of my life up to the day of her death.

One more instance, before I leave the subject, of her peculiar English of that epoch (for as time went on, though it was never very good, there was considerable improvement). She was driving me back to our home, Frimhurst, one day, the entrance to which was extremely awkward. Her coachman not being the soberest of men, one of the hind wheels caught the gate-post and an accident was narrowly avoided. Pulling up, he explained that the 'orses were pulling very 'ard. The Empress's angry rejoinder was: 'It's not the 'orses that are pulling 'ard, it's you that always forget the be'ind of the carriage.'

In connection with the boarding-school I spoke of, one of those little incidents occurred that beget reflections on the wide subject called 'human nature.' A very creditable Smyth relation of ours, who had figured in her youth in the 'Book of Beauty,' and who once told me that her mouth was considered an exact reproduction of Cupid's bow, had known Mademoiselle de Montijo in those Clifton days; indeed, the family had been asked to be kind to this young Spanish girl of partly Scotch descent. Naturally we imagined that the fact would be a passport to the good graces of the Empress; but she seemed to have no recollection of my cousin's existence, and we suddenly felt this was not a subject to be pursued.

In after-life I noticed that she would talk freely about the impecunious days of her childhood in Spain; how, from motives of economy, she and her sister were not allowed to wear stockings; how they would gallop twenty miles across country on rough, unshod horses, in order to have a good meal, for once in a way, at the house of a high-born and wealthy relation, and so on. This picturesque Spanish penuriousness appealed to her imagination; not so the dingy boarding-school era! I can only recall her alluding to it once, when she told us that her life had been made a burden to her 'at school' because of the colour of her hair—that wonderful golden-red that a few years later all the hairdressers in Europe were endeavouring to reproduce on the heads of their clients! Boarding-schools were not patronised by the aristocracy in those days, and I was never to learn anything about a bit of her life which would have interested me particularly.

In the same way, though less of a snob in the depths of her soul than any one it is possible to conceive, she obviously gloried in the illustriousness of her Spanish descent, was horrified if any of her relations

contemplated what she considered a *mésalliance*, and rather implacable if the marriage came off. And though she was proud, theoretically, of her Scotch blood, I came to the conclusion that certain genealogical investigations had not yielded a wholly satisfactory result, and that here again was a point upon which it was not tactful to cross-question her.

During the years that followed that first vision of her at the meet of the harriers, I personally saw little of her, being in Germany or Italy for a great part of the year ; and it was not till 1890, when, all my sisters being married, I took up my abode at Frimhurst, that I came to know her well. By way of illustrating the human, understanding side of the Empress perhaps I may be permitted a glance into our home life.

I have told elsewhere how, shortly before my mother's death, overcome by the tedium of life in the country, she was seized with a sudden desire to live in London, and how this prospect appalled my father and me. 'Il faut tâcher de la distraire, de l'égayer un peu,' said the Empress, and she began planning a dinner party for the following week to which my mother was to be invited, begging me to find out whom she would like to meet. And on the day when her last illness fell upon her, my mother had been discussing the matter with delight.

Shortly after her death I paid my first visit to Cap Martin, where the Empress was already meditating the building of her villa, 'Cyrnos'; and afterwards I accompanied her, as a sort of honorary *Demoiselle d'Honneur*, on a yachting trip down the east coast of the Adriatic. It was then, during two months of close intimacy, that I formed an impression of her character —an impression conceived in a first whirl of affection and admiration, but which the succeeding years only

served to deepen. 'Whatever may be her faults,' I wrote home, 'they are faults of a noble character, and one wonders how her worst enemies can ever have attributed littleness to her. Her judgments of people, including these, are so temperate, so free from bitterness, so generous and merciful, that one feels ashamed of one's own acrimony and harshness.' It is worth while saying this here, because many are under the impression that certain of her qualities were only acquired in old age. But in 1891 she was a great deal nearer to 'les événements,' as she always called the downfall of the Second Empire, than in 1918—the last date at which I came upon some remarks to this purpose, coupled with truisms concerning the mitigating effects of time upon character.

I remember noticing at Venice one convenient result of that gliding walk of hers. Some *festa* was going on; night after night the *Piazza* was thronged, and she always loved wandering unknown in a crowd. But if you lost her it was easy to find her again, for though there were scores of *tussore* parasols lined with green, none moved among the packed heads as did hers, without jerk or oscillation.

It was at Venice that I discovered that she had not a drop of artistic blood in her veins. It was amusing and at the same time embarrassing to look at pictures in her company, so anxious was she to believe and prove that she was enjoying them, yet so obviously at sea; also secretly bored to death, as are all people who have genuine interests of their own when condemned to flutter ignorantly round things they do not understand. Confronted by a fine portrait her comments were of the order of those you may overhear at an exhibition of the Royal Academy: 'Isn't that the image of Aunt Jane?' But if it were the case of an historical picture, the battle of Lepanto for instance, you could listen to

her by the hour, such was her grasp of the interests at stake and of what would have happened had the battle been the other way. It was this quality of hers, her knowledge of history, her perception of the general lie of events, that so profoundly impressed my friend Mr. Wickham Steed when he went with me to see her just after the Armistice was signed, and talked with her for five hours on end. 'There is not a soul alive,' he said, 'who has this precise knowledge of political events of the past. It is like talking with a dozen dead-and-gone statesmen, with the very incarnation of history!'

The yachting party consisted of three persons only, H.M.'s gentleman in attendance being Count Joseph Primoli, and at Corfu I learned to know her passionate love of justice. We arrived in the midst of one of the periodical disturbances between Jews and Christians—including a revival of the old charge of massacring a Christian child in honour of the Passover—and the Empress, greatly to the alarm of the local authorities, marched ostentatiously through the Ghetto, and insisted on presenting the Chief Rabbi with a large sum of money for the outcasts.

Wherever we went, the Empress being meticulous as to outside observances, the Church was visited, and the whole population would follow in her train. This used to annoy her considerably, for she had had enough of that sort of thing in the past and now cherished the unrealisable hope of preserving her *incognita*. Besides which, publicity involved large donations, and though she was a generous giver, she objected to her purse being prized open like an oyster.

On one occasion a supremely ridiculous incident happened, and to give point to it I must explain that she had a physical horror of relics which no sense of their sanctity had power to counteract. One can imagine her consternation, therefore, when we were

informed, on landing at Trau, that a ceremony had been arranged at the Cathedral in her honour, in which the shin-bone of the founder was to play a part. There was no escape, the church was filled to bursting, and as she knelt at the altar-rails, the organist meanwhile playing a thunderous valse-tune, the relic was not only produced, but as an unheard-of favour presented to her to kiss. I watched the whole scene from the background where I had modestly placed myself, fearing, as heretic, to desecrate the bone ; but the priest, informed by the mischief-loving Count Primoli that I also was of the Imperial party, made a kindly yet authoritative signal. And no sooner had I pressed my lips to the relic, than a bell was rung and the valse broke off abruptly in the middle of a bar—which is an exceedingly difficult feat to accomplish.[1] We subsequently visited a Convent, where the Mother Superior said she had heard that the Empress suffered from rheumatism ; if so, the application of the relic to the painful spot could doubtless be arranged. But the Empress, whose complaint was lumbago, hastily assured her that she was in the best of health.

I have many vignette-memories of that entrancing voyage : the journey from Trieste to join the yacht at Corfu in a huge liner, empty but for a crowd of Mussulmans on their way to Mecca, who walked about with large, long loaves of bread under their arms in the daytime, and used them as pillows at night ; I see Primoli, who was mad on photography, snapshotting the pilgrims, and the Empress's terror lest they should murder us all in consequence ; I see them draw aside their floating garments in civil dread of contamination as we moved amongst them ; I see the whole party, including the servants, in the throes of sea-sickness, while

[1] I have since been told it was probably a barrel-organ, which explains everything.

the Empress, who did not know what it meant and gloried in rough weather, was divided between genuine sympathy for our sufferings, and that mixture of scorn and evil triumphant delight which is the inevitable state of mind of the immune. . . . And here a vision of later years obtrudes itself : we are rounding the Mull of Cantire—labouring in what must surely be the most horrible bit of water in the world—and I see her, lashed, chair and all, to the mast, needless to say with no company save that of the crew !

. . . . . .

From that time onwards the Empress became one of the two pivots of my life in England, and when my father died in 1894 I took a little cottage about two miles from Farnborough Hill. If I mention that my public career as musician was just beginning, it is because I want to lay stress on the fact that never had beginner a more wonderful friend to look to. She had always been keen on women's work, and told me how furious it had made her during the Empire when they decided that, inasmuch as women were not eligible as members of the Légion d'Honneur, that distinction was to be conferred upon Rosa Bonheur's *brother*, who, it appears, was a very middling painter ! I now learned, too, that it was at the Empress's instigation that women were first employed in the French P.O., and how fierce the opposition had been.

Such being her views, it will be believed that all it was possible to do was done by her to help me. The expenses of printing some of my earliest compositions were borne by her ; and in my interests she broke a rule, rigorously kept ever since 'les événements,' never again to appear in public, and attended the first (and only) performance of my Mass at the Albert Hall in 1893. Alas ! too soon she came to the conclusion that in some ways I was a bad horse to

back—too uncompromising and bent on having things properly done, too averse to diplomacy and the use of soft sawder! 'Vous n'êtes donc jamais lasse de vous faire des ennemis!' she would say.

This, according to her own account, was not a matter she herself had considered negligible. I remember her once relating how at Biarritz she had been at infinite pains to shower civilities upon an imposing gentleman whom she believed to be the editor of *The Times*,—a journal that had been inimical to the Empire from the first—and how it gradually became manifest that the object of her amenities was not connected with *The Times* at all, but owner of a racing stable! I suppose Sovereigns are obliged to do this sort of thing, but I wondered how such a conspicuously sincere, upright nature could thus stoop to conquer. It was, however, one of the peculiarities of her complex character that, in spite of a sense of honour so delicate that at times one felt as if all other nations were crawling worms compared to the Spaniards, she could not conceive why any reasonable being should shrink from opportunism in cases such as one's 'career.'

In the same way she would advise me to be specially civil to so and so, because he or she was very rich; and I must admit that though she was pre-eminently the friend of the unfortunate, riches appealed to and impressed her. I remember saying in the case of a certain Dives, that, apart from his being a cad and antipathetic to me, I hated rich people. Whereupon she remarked with some violence, 'Dieu, que c'est bête!'

It is chiefly on account of the Empress that I regret not having kept a diary till late in life, except during a brief period of three months. Outstanding events get into one's correspondence, and there is some chance of refreshing memory at this source later on. But as

regards the side-lights thrown on history in the course of conversation with one who has played a leading part in it, nothing but a diary meets the case. At special moments, when some passing event brought sunken details of the past whirling to the surface, she would discuss the matter eagerly, illustrate it by her personal knowledge, go to a drawer, pull out papers, and prove her statements. Especially would this happen, of course, in connection with affairs in France, and one marvelled at her dignity and self-restraint in never using the terrible weapons that lay to her hand.

In those early days I used in my innocence to urge her to write her memoirs, and even maintain it was a duty. She said it never would be done by her—mainly because the idea of reliving her past filled her with horror. And there were other reasons. 'In such cases,' she remarked, 'one is surrounded by St. Peters—people who in a moment of infidelity failed you, but later on in their remorse did their best to atone—sometimes at heavy cost to themselves. Who could show up such penitents? Yet if memoirs are not to be useless it must be done'—which was unanswerable.

Many years later she spoke one day of the folly of supposing that she and the Emperor, who had little to gain by success and everything to lose by defeat, had pressed for war. As for the *rôle* of firebrand attributed to herself, she said she had not even been present at the councils of that period, the Emperor having informed her, on her return from opening the Suez Canal, that M. Ollivier desired her attendance should be dispensed with, 'which,' she remarked characteristically, 'I found quite natural. Former Ministers had requested my presence, this one requested my absence. Why not?' She added, that so far were she and the Emperor from conviction that France would be victorious, and so convinced that in the opposite case they themselves

would be driven from the Tuileries, that as soon as war was declared she made over the Crown Jewels to the Ministry on her own responsibility—*and got a receipt!*—'for I knew,' she said, 'that if it came to a revolution, I should be accused of having stolen them.'

As the Emperor was very ill at the time, and in constant pain, he may not have always been able to conceal his forebodings. If so, and indeed in any case, it would be like her to do her best—her violent best, one may say—to profess enthusiastic confidence; hence perhaps the legend of her crying, 'C'est ma guerre à moi!' and so forth.

This trait, a belief in keeping people's spirits up, I remember noticing when I knew her but slightly in the course of a visit she once paid to the sick-bed of her old steward.

'But you are looking splendid, M'Laurin!' she said to the dying man; 'we shall soon have you back at work again!'

'Now don't you believe it, M'Laurin,' sobbed his very Scotch wife—'that's the Empress's kindness! But the doctor says you'll never be better in this world, and if you're alive to-morrow it'll be a miracle!' And after the Empress had gone poor M'Laurin remarked: 'I hope Her Majesty'll come again soon; *she cheers me up, like!*'

Her comments on this incident were very funny. 'O this Scotch truthfulness!' she cried. 'If the poor man has got to die, what harm to let him hope to the last?'—adding: 'when my time comes, Heaven grant that I may not be surrounded by truth-telling friends!'

This, and a few other details, I found in some letters of my own, miraculously preserved by one of my family. Thus I am able to state a fact I had quite forgotten—namely, that at the end of 1892 she believed in a possible return to power of her dynasty. Let the

political historian say what crisis was raging in France, but she then thought there was nothing for it but the Commune, or else an appeal to the people—'and there is only one name that appeals to them,' she added. The individuals who came out worst in that particular *fracas* were the very same who had combined to vilify her in 1870, and I remarked that she must rejoice at this exposure of her enemies—a sentiment I should not have uttered in later years, when I came to know the strength of her public feeling and her complete immunity from personal points of view. Her reply was that she took no pleasure in this side issue of an incident that made her sick and miserable for France. 'If they must attack each other, why do it in such fashion?' she exclaimed.

Here M. Pietri struck in—Pietri who, as I have said, adored her, and of whom, in spite of her detestation of Corsicans (though why she detested them I cannot recall), she was as fond as it was possible to her to be fond of any one. Alluding to her magnificently kept resolution never to defend herself, since defence involves attack, he said slyly: 'Si l'on attaquait à la manière de l'Impératrice on serait inoffensif!' With a flash of her eyes the Empress retorted: 'Ah! moi je ne suis pas Corse!' 'Non,' said Pietri, who loved chaffing her, 'une fausse Espagnole!' which was one of the epithet used, in a very different sense, by her enemies, but which in this case meant a Spaniard who meekly accepts insult! And this particular application of the phrase, involving a compliment to Spain, delighted her.

She would have been less than human, however, if Bismarck's revelations concerning the Benedetti telegram which were published about that date had left her indifferent, and next time I saw her she cried, almost triumphantly: 'Vous voyez comme on a raison

de ne pas se défendre!' Yet I think what gave her as much gratification as anything in connection with that affair was the joy of our own Royal Family at seeing her and the Emperor vindicated at last—thanks to the cynicism of Bismarck's confessions—from the charge of having brought about the war.

II

All who knew her would agree on one point, that never was a more baffling conundrum than the Empress's character. It was quite possible to predict how she would feel or act on a given occasion, but impossible to 'rhyme,' as the Germans say, her warring characteristics.

Take the question of pride, for instance—keynote to the attitude of incomparable dignity maintained by her since the fall of the Empire. It did not prevent her, as we see, from kowtowing to a journalist; and though she had reason enough, Heaven knows, for limitless gratitude and affection as regards Queen Victoria, it seemed to me unnecessary and rather humiliating to conceal her convictions on a given subject when in that august presence, for fear of giving annoyance. And yet at times she did so.

Again, take the matter of kind-heartedness. In certain ways she was, without exception, the kindest person I have ever met in the whole course of my life—the most lenient, the most considerate, and the least exacting. Nothing was too small to be thought out and done by her if it was a question of giving pleasure or alleviating pain, whether of mind or body. Yet she was capable, even in the case of old friends and old servants, of a curious hardness that would amaze and puzzle. What had touched that chord you could not imagine; but there it was, and I have no doubt that

the causes were her lack of intuition, or poetic imagination, as to character, and her extremely halting and uncertain sense of humour.

Writing the above sentence, I once more become aware that no sooner have you stated definitely, 'She was thus and thus,' than you find yourself obliged to qualify the statement. I suppose poetic imagination includes the power of understanding the spirit of an utterance or an action, and no one would kindle more readily at an instance of moral beauty that appealed to her. But it was quite on the cards that the reverse might happen, and that, far from chiming in with your Hymn of Praise, the comment would be : 'Comme il a été bête, celui-là !'

Her sense of humour was perhaps the most incalculable element of all. She would enjoy the ludicrousness of dear Sir Evelyn Wood falling on his knees before her on the gravel path, and kissing her hand in the costume he adopted when driving over from Government House on Sundays to play lawn tennis at Farnborough Hill ; which costume consisted of a top hat, a frock-coat, white flannel trousers, and tennis shoes—his extremities being enveloped, while he sat on the box, in a rug, lest the camp should be scandalised at the Sabbath recreations of its commandant. In fact, obviously funny situations appealed to her much as they do to children. Moreover she could be exceedingly funny herself, and would tell a story admirably and effectively, the only drawback being that, having finished, she would instantly tell it a second, and perhaps a third time, with regrettable amplifications and explanations—which I have been informed is a not infrequent Spanish trait. She was an admirable mimic, too, in some cases—in others an execrable one—and seemed to have no idea which were, and which were not, her masterpieces. But this was probably the

result of immunity from criticism—a corrective she could entirely dispense with in regions of greater importance, being critical and merciless to a fault as regards herself.

A story she was fond of telling, and told to perfection, was a little scene between the then Crown Princess of Prussia, later the Empress Frederick, and her cousin, the Grand Duchess X—(not a favourite cousin)—which took place in the Imperial box at the Opera. The Empress had marked with secret trepidation the growing 'nervosité' of the Crown Princess, which finally culminated in a remark addressed with chilling intonation to her Russian kinswoman: 'I do not like being called Vicky,' she observed, 'except by members of my own family.' Thereupon the other, examining the house through her bejewelled opera-glass, said lightly: 'Eh bien, ma chère, je t'appellerai comme tu voudras, Altesse Royale si tu le désires! . . . *Et toi, tu m'appelleras Altesse Imperiale!*' One could well credit the Empress's account of her agony, seated in that box between the august combatants.

Last summer she gave me a most amusing account of the visit paid by her to the Sultan, on her way home after opening the Suez Canal—a visit she was requested to pay, so she told me, by the English Government, the Sultan being Suzerain of Egypt. He sallied forth to meet her man-of-war in a *caïque* built to hold one passenger only, himself; nevertheless, she was obliged to step into it and was rowed to shore at a terrific pace, practically sitting on his knees. I may add that she was the first Sovereign of her sex received by His Majesty, and of course the only woman with whom he had ever been seen in public. One must allow that he seems to have done the thing with commendable thoroughness.

Apparently she had cherished a hope which at that

time must have been still more fantastically unrealisable than in voyages undertaken by her later,—she had actually dreamed of stealing about Constantinople *incognita!* but unfortunately her host would not leave her for an hour. I had forgotten for the moment the Sultan's notorious infatuation, and asked why he had been so embarrassingly attentive? 'Mon Dieu, je ne sais pas!' said she, for, as I have told elsewhere, she never referred either to her beauty or to the passions it inspired. But Madame Antonia d'Attainville, one of her young relations—companion, preferred before all others, of her later years—winked at me and said, 'C'était sa grande admiration!' Then I remembered the whole thing, and said we all knew that the Sultan had often expressed his regrets at having met her too late, etc., whereupon she ejaculated 'Bêtises!' and went on to tell us that nothing would persuade the Turks but that her suite was her harem. They thought it was always like that in the case of female Sovereigns. 'Pourtant,' she remarked, 'ils étaient presque tous bien vieux . . . et si ça eût été ainsi, je les aurais choisis plus jeunes!' And in this connection she quoted an enchanting Spanish proverb: 'Si vous voulez aller au diable, au moins allez-y en voiture!'

Now all this proves that in some ways she had a keen sense of humour, but one of the most hopeless undertakings in the world was to try to tell her even very obvious jokes. How describe her puzzlement—her desperate efforts to understand—her agonised attempt at a laugh, followed by some remark which clearly proved that the point had escaped her! One could not refrain from telling a funny story sometimes in order to witness its still funnier reception. She was fond of saying that she preferred English 'humour' to French 'wit,' which she described as 'de l'esprit sur la pointe d'une épingle,' and I cannot help suspecting

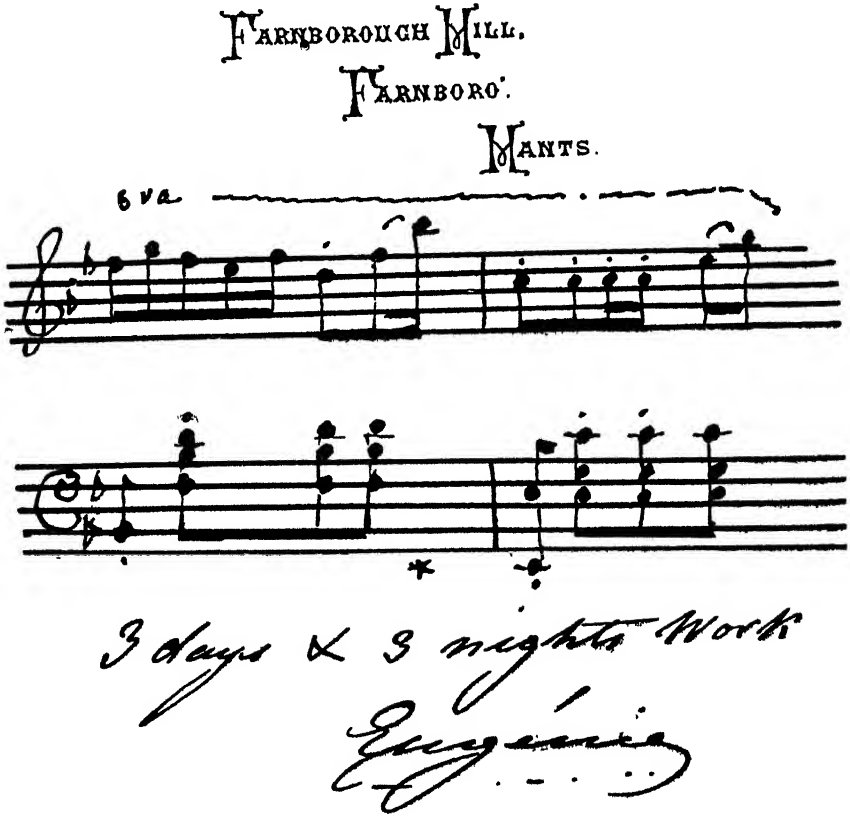
that her extreme difficulty in understanding that sort of 'esprit' had something to do with it.

But if for once, to use an expressive vulgarism, she really did catch on, what triumph! what a scene! It reminded one of a child's delight blowing open a watch! That joke would be repeated by her over and over again, its anatomy analysed, and comment after comment would satisfactorily prove to you (and herself) that the point had been grasped. And once more you realised—as in other cases where, perhaps, it was less a matter of unmixed delight—the childlike quality of certain aspects of her spirit.

Again, as regards artistic feeling, one is puzzled to say how much of it she possessed. I have said that pictures were a sealed book to her, and one of the difficult moments at Farnborough Hill was being called upon to admire works of certain famous painters of the Second Empire which were unhesitatingly accepted by her as masterpieces. Nor can one deny that such decorations in the house as she herself was responsible for were not in good taste. Yet it is certain that she must always have dressed beautifully, and in later days her costumes were the perfection of appropriateness, simplicity, and grace. She once told a very elegant sister of mine that in the old days no pains were too great for her to take as regards her toilette, but that once she had left her dressing-room she never gave the matter another thought—which is exactly what one would expect. There is no doubt whatever that she loved nature; but I have come to the conclusion that this particular form of sensitiveness to beauty, shared by some of the least artistic people I know, can have nothing to do with the so-called artistic temperament.

On one point no qualifications whatever are needed. Any one more totally devoid of musical instinct I have

seldom met. She was quite aware of this, and would make fun of herself on the subject, as testified by the following unique autograph, which, I think, dates from



about 1895. (I make no attempt to sort the quavers and semiquavers ; that way madness lies.)

Countless are my memories of her connected with music—among them her touching belief that the Prince Imperial must have had strong though undeveloped musical proclivities, inasmuch as, when a baby, after hearing Madame Alboni sing, he reached forward out of his nurse's arms, and putting his fingers on the

singer's vast throat, said 'Ici! ici!' It was a charming anecdote, but seemed to me rather an indication of the map-making genius for which the Prince became celebrated at Woolwich than a proof of musical instinct. For Madame Alboni was so enormous that people used to call her 'the elephant that has swallowed a nightingale'—and to find the right spot on so large a surface was a remarkable feat for a baby in arms. But if one had said so to the Empress, this is the sort of joke she would not have understood. Besides which she would have preferred her own reading.

Once upon a time our friend George Henschel, who was staying with us, asked me if I thought she would like him to sing her Schumann's 'Two Grenadiers'? Of course she said she would be delighted, but as it was to be sung in German, I took the precaution of explaining that Heine's poem was a tribute to the Great Emperor. This explanation seemed to be unnecessary, for apparently she knew all about the song (in which, as we know, 'The Marseillaise' is introduced), and no doubt had heard it scores of times in the French version. None the less next day she remarked to me: 'Quelle drôle d'idée de votre ami de me chanter cette chanson-là . . . "le Kaiser . . . le Kaiser"!' Horror-struck I explained matters all over again, and needless to say that at the time no one would have suspected a hitch anywhere; her manners were proof against far severer trials than this!

Close on the heels of this incident came a similar one, if possible more surprising still. One day she paid a visit to the County Lunatic Asylum, and on her arrival the band (composed of lunatics) struck up 'Partant pour la Syrie,' which is the hymn of the Napoleonic dynasty and is attributed to *la Reine Hortense*. I felt certain that it was not on their usual repertory and must have been specially studied for the

occasion ; so as we drove away, I remarked that it was a delightful idea on their part. The Empress gave a great jump : 'Comment ?' she exclaimed, 'vous êtes bien sûre que c'était "Partant pour la Syrie" qu'ils ont joué ? Il me semblait connaître cette mélodie-là, mais j'ai pensé que c'était *God save!*' . . . And a letter was despatched expressing her gratification at this delicate attention.

I think no one can ever have had greater natural violence of temperament than the Empress. Age may be supposed to have mitigated it, but as late as 1918 I have seen her possessed by a passion of wrath and pouring forth a torrent of magnificent invective such as few young women could emulate. We had been discussing the future of Serbia, and gradually worked round to the murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga. None have ever disputed the proposition that these unfortunate Sovereigns were puppets of Austria, and I had been contending that this fact should count, to a certain extent at least, in defence of a people struggling for independence. But the Empress hated and disbelieved in the Slavs. Moreover Austria was one of her sacred subjects, owing chiefly to the romantic attachment she cherished for the aged Emperor Francis Joseph.

This cult found expression in a visit she had paid him some years previously, and her fond belief was that one as sorely stricken in his domestic affections as she herself would inevitably share the emotion she felt at the thought of their meeting again. Pathetic illusion ! blatant instance of her lack of intuition as regards character ! I do not suppose that in the whole world you could have found another monarch who, on being informed of her desire to visit him, would merely have said, as did that cold-hearted old cynic, 'Was will

denn eigentlich die alte Eugenie?'[1] This supremely characteristic remark went the round of Vienna, and greatly amused the Viennese who rather admired, but had no illusions concerning, their venerable Sovereign. The following winter was spent by me at Vienna, and when, on my return to England, the poor unsuspecting Empress cross-questioned me as to the impression her visit had left in his faithful heart, for once I lied—and lied freely.

To return to the murder of the unfortunate Alexander and Draga, the Empress's contention was that the horrible circumstances of the crime, though carried out (as she must have known) by a Court cabal, proved the Serbians to be a race of barbarians, unworthy to take rank among civilised nations. Thereupon I could not refrain from pointing out that no nation, civilised or otherwise, had gone the lengths of the French in the unnameable charges brought by a more or less regularly constituted tribunal against Marie Antoinette. It was not a bad retort, for Marie Antoinette was a still greater idol of hers than the Emperor Francis Joseph, and for the moment she could not think of an adequate rejoinder.

Nobody likes being cornered, and one could not expect a woman of ninety-three, and an ex-Empress, to like it more than another. As a matter of fact, large-minded as she was, and far from demanding other deference than that due to her age, she was not accustomed to her *dicta* being opposed. Pietri was of course a privileged person, though she did not always endure his bluntness with equanimity; otherwise I think young Count Clary, son of her former Master of the Horse (?), and myself were the only two people who ever ventured to contradict her, for which reason she bracketed us together as 'mauvais caractère, tous les deux!'

[1] What does old Eugénie want?

Long, long ago I remember a splendid onslaught of hers. Something I said infuriated her to such a pitch that she suddenly seized me by the shoulders, and, with an 'allez-vous-en pour vous calmer!' ran me bodily out of the smoking-room, dragging one half of the double swing-door to with such violence that I found myself involuntarily plagiarising the young lady of Norway. I cannot remember ever hearing of a similar outbreak on her part, and fear I must have begun by showing temper, or at least unseemly zeal, myself. Anyhow, to continue the plagiarism, if the door squeezed me flat, well may I exclaim 'what of that!' for I never think of that scene—the Empress's swift concentrated fury and the herculean strength it gave her—without laughing.

Her usual method of signifying annoyance was a way she had of looking at you without seeing you. Suddenly you would find yourself reduced to the status of a plate-glass window, thus to remain for several hours, or in extreme cases for several days. Another plan of hers was to address her replies to some third person. Any one would do; and thus some maiden, who happened to be having tea with her between two sets of tennis, has found herself recipient of the Empress's views concerning protection, colonisation, bimetallism, or the principles of foreign policy. One day last summer I was lunching alone with her and Madame d'Attainville, as so often happened, and being by no means sure of my sympathy she addressed her scathing analysis of the English Government's fiscal policy to Antonia, who naturally had not studied the question but none the less went on comfortably murmuring at intervals: 'Mais oui! je crois bien! . . . naturellement!' and raising her eyebrows at the proper places though I fancy her thoughts were elsewhere. At last the Empress saw the ludicrousness of the

situation, and remarked : 'Je m'adresse à toi . . . mais à l'intention d'une autre personne !'

There was one particular manifestation of annoyance that could only be studied at meals. The Empress had told me that toothpicks, together with a certain over-thorough, not to say dreadful, use of finger-bowls, were forbidden by the Emperor at the Royal Table. But in my day the toothpick had come back again, and at certain critical moments you might watch it turn into a weapon of warfare in the Empress's hands. Brandished right and left, it gave point and emphasis to her argument ; put to its proper purpose, the while she listened with simulated patience to your reply, nothing but the reflection that never was a human body made of more magnificent material than hers, relieved your anxiety as to the outcome of so furious an onslaught. Meanwhile her eye would be fixed on you sideways, darting such disgust and aversion that you were thankful it was only a toothpick and not a stiletto she held in her *crispé* fingers.

I must add that sooner or later after these little scenes she would be at special pains to soften down the impression—perhaps put her arm round the offender's shoulder as the party trooped down the corridor. On one such occasion, quite in early days, I remember her saying to me, 'vous n'êtes pas commode, ma chère !' It was said chaffingly and in all friendliness, but she meant it !

I love insisting on the violence of the Empress's temperament, because apart from its being so wonderful at her age one must remember that it was this immense force, tamed and channelled, that held her unswerving in the road of heroic endurance she had marked out for herself, and made of her a live and inexhaustible source of beneficence where others were

concerned. There was one Royal House she detested, for political reasons of course: 'I would rather see them dragged down than ourselves uplifted!' she exclaimed one day. 'Could I but live to witness their downfall, I would willingly accept an extra spell of purgatory in exchange!' She raised her voice, and raised her arm: 'Ce sentiment que j'exprime. . . .' But here Pietri cut in with one of his amused little comments: 'Ce n'est pas un *sentiment*, Madame, c'est une *passion!*'—'Eh bien,' cried she, 'c'est la dernière que j'éprouve'; adding in accents of tragi-comic regret, '*et combien faut-il encore pour la réchauffer!*'

Less than she imagined was sufficient to rekindle the fire. True, it did not often flare up to this extent, but association with her was like a stroll on the upper slopes of Vesuvius; a chance stumble cracks the cool lava . . . and lo! the sole of your boot is smouldering! It was this eternal ardour, combined with a powerful brain and unlimited intellectual curiosity, that kept her so young, and guaranteed her against boredom. An advance in science, a new discovery in medicine (which I trust one is not expected to class among the sciences) was a fortune to her bookseller, for no scientific or technical book was too recondite for her. She was a great and wise doctor herself, and thanks to her medical instinct and knowledge, also no doubt to her magnificent constitution, was able to tackle with impunity certain Spanish dishes—high explosives, swooning in languorous oil—that daunted even her own compatriots. Her firm intention to go up in an aeroplane was crossed by the war, and her only consolation was to reflect that her growing blindness would have taken away half the pleasure. 'But if, when peace comes, I recover my sight,' she said, 'then . . . nous allons voir!' And I have not the slightest doubt that had she lived to return to England she would have gone

up in an aeroplane—not by-and-by, but this very summer.

I fancy hers was one of those natures that love danger for its own sake. Old as she was, and surrounded by people who felt it to be their duty to say 'don't,' if there was any danger going she wanted to be in it. At one period of the war the Germans were said to be planning to bomb Aldershot, and one objective would certainly be the Royal Aeroplane Factory, just beyond her park. 'S'ils viennent,' she said, her whole face lighting up with excitement, 'au moins nous serons au premier rang!' and I could not help fancying that the presence in her house of a guest who made no secret of her own extreme dread of air-raids rather enhanced her delight in the prospect.

To one whose physical courage was so flawless, whose sense of honour was so passionate, it must have been torture that among the cruel things said of her in 1870 was the attributing of her flight to fear. As Empress she had walked the cholera hospitals. Those who at that time said 'don't'—and there must have been plenty—were not listened to. But the French would seem to have forgotten the incident. I never heard her allude to that monstrous imputation of cowardice, but in the early days of the late war one was to learn how it had rankled.

When the French Government removed to Bordeaux, Paris became a desert. A former *Dame du Palais* of hers was among those who took refuge in England, and though, when I saw her in Paris two years later, she did not comment on her reception by the Empress, I can well imagine it! What she did tell me, however, was, that the Empress had instantly announced her own determination to start for Paris then and there. 'If I left after Sedan,' she said, 'it was in order to save bloodshed, but some said it was

from fear! Now I will prove to them that that was not the reason!' My informant added that if, after unexampled efforts, she and the rest of the 'don't' party carried the day, it was by insisting that if the Empress were to go to France it might make difficulties for the French Government, which she would rather have died than do.

One of the strangest things about her was that, notwithstanding this unquenchable fire within, you felt instinctively that love can never have played a great part in her life. People have said that her skill, as Cæsar's wife, in avoiding the breath of scandal, is a great proof of her 'cleverness,' but I suspect it was still more a case of absence of temptation from within. She was not tender, for one thing, nor imaginative; and imagination plays a great part, I think, in women's love affairs. Above all, not to beat about the bush, there was no sensuality in her composition. Age has nothing to do with it. There are old women who are far from being that *bête-noire* of the Empress, 'de vieilles folles,' in whom you none the less feel how great a part that element must have played in their youth. Without their realising it, to the end of their days their whole outlook is thereby coloured. But in her case you felt convinced that it must have been the feeblest string of the lyre from the first.

She was anything but lacking in romance, however, and given a temperament so passionate in other respects, it would be strange indeed had there been no love episode. Even the least amorously gifted should be able to fall in love once in a lifetime, and that much she accomplished. Unfortunately this was not a subject it was possible to broach with her, and her contemporaries, among whom the story was no secret, are dead long ago. But it is well known in the inner circle,

and I think there is no indiscretion in repeating it as it was told to me by a relation of hers—one deep in her confidence, a faithful, ardent admirer, to whom, in a rare and fortunate moment of expansion, she communicated the details.

One must begin by saying that the Empress idolised her sister—in my humble opinion this was the strongest emotion of her life—and after the Duc d'Albe married that sister their house became her home. A certain Duc de S—— became deeply enamoured of the Duchess, and in order to gain easy access to the house made love to Mademoiselle de Montijo, who, suspecting nothing, fell desperately in love with him. The truth having dawned upon her she did exactly what one would expect her to do under the circumstances—took poison ; and when the fact was discovered, nothing would persuade her to swallow an antidote. Finally, as a last resource, the man she loved was brought to her bedside to break her resolution, and as he bent over her he whispered, '*Where are my letters ?*' Well can I imagine that his victim's love thereupon perished in the blaze of her contempt ! 'You are like Achilles' spear,' she exclaimed, 'that healed the wounds it had made !' . . . and forthwith she swallowed the antidote.

Even if the story had not come to me from an indisputably reliable source, one would be certain that it must be true. She herself was probably proud of only having loved once ; myself, I wish she could have had the experience of a second and happier passion. But to wish that is to wish the Empress had been some one else—which is inadmissible.

III

The anomalies of her mental equipment were nowhere more baffling than on the field of politics.

I am not venturing to speak of her political action in France ; nothing save the lapse of time can decide how far it went, and as I have hinted, there were documents in her possession which, to my certain knowledge, would reverse many a settled conviction.

Judging by her character, and in spite of a qualified sympathy with democratic ideals, I imagine she must always have been an absolutist at heart. I remember her saying that though the English monarchical system was undoubtedly the only one suited to England, to be a ruler bereft of real power would not appeal to her personally, nor did she think the position dignified 'au fond.' At the same time she allowed that to fill it adequately required a rare combination of qualities—especially in war-time ; 'and if you were to search history,' she added, 'you could not find a more ideal war-time monarch than *le Roi Georges*.'

As for the verdict of history on herself, a very sympathetic cover-notice in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for this month (August 1920) quotes a bitter remark I have heard her make more than once : 'Ma légende est faite ; au début du règne, je fus la femme futile, ne s'occupant que de chiffons ; et, vers la fin de l'Empire, je suis devenue la femme fatale, qu'on rend responsable de toutes les fautes et de tous les malheurs ! Et la légende l'emporte toujours sur l'histoire !' One day, in the last summer she was to spend at Farnborough (1919), she said, 'Je déteste les gens qui ont peur de la responsabilité. On veut me rendre responsable pour les événements ; bien ! j'en accepte la responsabilité ! . . . au moins j'ai l'air de l'avoir acceptée, puisque je me tais !' Then, after a pause, she added, 'C'est l'orgueil,' and I shall never forget her accent as she said it—the proud magnificent expression that was on her face. . . .

Nevertheless, towards the end of her life, when the

Great War, monstrous epilogue of the Bismarck revelations, opened all eyes to Germany's designs of world-dominion, I think she came to believe in the silent depths of her heart that that legend of 'la femme fatale' might some day fade out of existence. I would often urge—only one had to put these things very carefully, so intolerant was she of anything that might be construed into flattery—that the self-restraint exercised by her since the fall of the Empire must shed a reflex light on the past. And she herself was surely too sensible, too just, to believe that such testimony could be swept aside as worthless. So, at least, I hope.

I think the Empress cared for politics more than anything, and if you take passionate interest in a subject, it is hard not to believe yourself specially equipped for it. One day I had been asking her who were the most *fascinating* personalities she had met, and among them, greatly to my surprise, she mentioned Bismarck! 'When it was worth his while,' she added, with a peculiar look on her face, 'no one could be a more adroit courtier.' To extol her beauty would have left her indifferent, and suddenly it was borne in upon me that he must have laid himself out to flatter her on the score of her political *flair!* It was late in the sixties when last he was in Paris, and such flattery would have been well 'worth his while!'

Whatever her political action and influence may or may not have been in France, listening to her comments on current English politics I reluctantly came to the conclusion that seldom was any one more pertinaciously wrong-headed! If black seemed the obvious colour to name, she would say white; if the turn to be taken lay on one hand, she would maintain that salvation was to be found on the other. And, still stranger fact, although, as better judges than myself can testify, her

political knowledge was unlimited, her judgment on past events sound and even brilliant, there were certain political factors which she seemed incapable of grasping because collective states of mind escaped her.

The Dreyfus case is an instance. This was a conundrum to which she possessed no clue. People who knew nothing whatever about France might be excused for racking their brains as to what it was all about, though to others who, like myself, had some acquaintance with French mentality, *l'Affaire*, however regrettable, was comprehensible. But the Empress never got beyond asking how it was possible that a *question of justice* should be treated in such a fashion? I have said that a sense of justice was among her ruling characteristics. Here it was outraged, and her lack of insight into the spirit of a people did the rest.

She had believed from the first in the innocence of Dreyfus, and was amazed at the storm which this conviction was to bring about her head. Not that she would have shrunk from proclaiming it in any case, but it is strange that she failed to realise the state of feeling in France. Her earliest intimation of it was the behaviour of the very first person who came to see her as she passed through Paris—a lady, who began with the three profound *révérences* which, it appears, are *de rigueur* on entering the presence of royalty. ('Je vous dis cela,' interjected the Empress, 'pour vous montrer la personne.') But when, as was inevitable, *l'Affaire* was broached and the Empress's views became manifest, her visitor fled from the room in horror without even *one* curtsey! She also told me that she and the Duchesse de Mouchy had all but quarrelled for good and all on this terrible theme—'that is to say,' she added, 'it was the Duchess who was almost ready to give *me* up!' But this, of course, was a humorous exaggeration.

Again, during the late war, her sentimental attach-

ment to the Emperor Francis Joseph, and perhaps, too, an old political hatred of Italy, made it impossible to her to see the inevitableness of the break-up of Austria; and I perceived that she knew nothing, or rather chose to know nothing, of what the Austrian Empire really amounted to—a conglomerate of States in which different languages were spoken, and which were welded together by the cement of mutual hatred. She had read every word of a book I had taken malicious pleasure in calling her attention to—my friend H. Wickham Steed's classic study of the Hapsburg Dynasty—and ever since she had been desirous to know the author—a desire that was fulfilled 18 months before her death. But for all the conviction it brought her, she might never have read that book at all, and it was the same when the subject was discussed between her and the author. Amenable as few people I have met to new ideas, in some directions you were up against a wall; and her one reason for tolerance of the Jugo-Slav idea was, I fear, that she knew it would be a thorn in Italy's side! Otherwise, whether from the standpoint of European tranquillity, of the peculiar interests of England (which she desired to see safeguarded at all costs), or even of abstract justice, she refused to admit the *raison d'être* of a Jugo-Slav State.

Still the fact remains, that the person of my acquaintance I most intensely longed to see at all critical moments in the last five nightmare years was the Empress—so sane and so unshakable was her faith in ultimate victory. She was blessedly free from that belief in their own strategical powers which temporarily clouded the intellects of many of one's most revered friends; and once she made me laugh by saying, in reference to H. Belloc's far-famed articles in *Land and Water*: 'Je déteste les livres qui vous

donnent l'illusion de comprendre des choses que vous savez très bien ne *pas* comprendre!' She gloried in the raising of Kitchener's army—a feat to which the patriotism and devotion of no other country in the world, she said, would have been equal; and later on she was even more fired by the fine attitude of Sir Douglas Haig, and the armies he led, in the matter of the Supreme Command. Of course England was not the only nation called upon to make that gesture of magnanimity; but the problem between ourselves and France was peculiarly complicated, and the Empress maintained that such a triumph of commonsense over national vanity could only happen on this side of the Channel. 'Ah! you are an easy race to govern!' she would say wistfully.

All the same, I am sorry to say that she, who up to 1914 had worshipped England and English ways to an extent that sometimes seemed to me excessive, would now level many a reproach against us.

There were many reasons to account for it. As years went on she had become intensely Spanish, and I think felt a little uncomfortable about Spanish neutrality; but the form it took was railing at the stupidity of the English, who wanted all countries to be dragged into the war, and did not see how greatly it was to the advantage of the Allies that Spain should remain outside. During the first two years of the war I had been away, either in France or Italy, so do not know if she was speaking generally or referring to some special incident.

Then there was the censorship, and the special supervision exercised over a foreign establishment such as hers—matters in which I thought her curiously unreasonable. I imagine that here again the Spaniard in her was specially sensitive. 'Here am I,' she would

say angrily, 'whose love for England has all my life amounted to a passion, who have taken up my abode among you, half of whose house has become a hospital for your wounded officers. . . . Not that I think anything of that,' she threw in quickly; 'it is my duty and my pleasure—but at least it shows where my heart is. And yet it would appear that I am *un personnage suspect!*' It was vain to try and make her see that a principle was involved, that her Swedish footman or other of her foreign servants might receive and write letters, or do deeds it was impossible for her to supervise. She was wounded in her pride, and either couldn't or wouldn't see the point.

D.O.R.A. and all her works were anathema to her. 'I will not live in England when the war is over,' she once said, though I knew she did not mean it; 'this used to be a free country where people were left alone, but now you shower *des petits papiers* on one, just as military-mad Continental nations do, and ask for oaths, and dates, and signatures! It was because there was none of that over here that one loved England.' And one day, when I remarked, possibly with some heat, that we had perhaps been too careless in the past, and that anyhow it was only reasonable to take precautions in war-time, she looked at me curiously. 'Strange,' she said, 'how the war has changed even you! You used to listen reasonably and with good humour to criticism of your country; now you are up in arms at a word!' I couldn't exactly speak my thought, which was, that when your country is safe and at peace you do not mind fault-finding, but when it is in the throes of a life-and-death struggle the carpings of ever so friendly and beloved a foreigner are hard to bear. Yet something of this sentiment must have made itself felt in my reply; I think she partly understood and partly resented. And the whole incident is referable to that trait I spoke

of—lack of comprehension for the collective sentiments of a people.

On the other hand, everything connected with her hospital was a source of unmitigated joy to her. How human she was about it!—how delighted, one June day in 1918, when the King and Queen came to inspect it! 'People will take it seriously now,' she said, 'and that is what I want.' Well they might! No modern appliance was too expensive for her, no contrivance for the comfort of her wounded officers too far-fetched, too complicated for her eager thought to devise. How proudly she said one day last year, 'Not one of them but, when he was well again, has come to see me.' And if in the case of a slow and doubtful recovery her constant pre-occupation was touching to witness, the one or two deaths that occurred under that roof plunged her into such grief, that one day, speaking of a boy whose third operation seemed likely to end badly, Antonia said, with reason: 'On craint autant pour l'Impératrice que pour lui, le pauvre garçon!'

And I must not forget to say that all and any means of increasing a patient's hold on life were welcomed by her. There was one young lady visitor whom we used to chaff about the devastation her visits wrought in their hearts; 'Tant mieux!' said the Empress, 'cela leur fera du bien d'être amoureux!'

She used often to insist on the faultless manners of her patients: 'Many of these young fellows are clerks, solicitors, engineers, not necessarily belonging by birth and education to the class of gentlemen; and yet there is not one of them whose behaviour has not been perfect—modest, dignified, grateful, all one could desire! "Comme ils sont foncièrement bien-élevés, les Anglais, n'importe d'où ils viennent—de l'Angleterre ou des colonies anglaises!"' And she went on to say that

young Frenchmen of the equivalent class might easily have fallen into bumptiousness by way of proving they were not shy ; ' and of course it would have been because they *were* shy,' she added.

Her hospital was one of the last to be demobilised ; she refused to do it till absolutely commanded. Meanwhile she informed all the patients, many of whom were to convalesce in the neighbourhood of Aldershot, that they could have the run of her house and gardens. ' " Puisque je vous ai connu *au lit*," leur dis-je, " impossible d'être plus intime ! " '

One day last autumn Maurice Baring, for whose whole family she cherished a special and comprehensible attachment, lunched with her at Farnborough Hill, and afterwards he said to me : ' It is useless telling people, as one does, that the Empress is wonderful. Only those who see her can know *how* wonderful she is. She is thirty at most ! so brilliant, so amusing, such delicate exquisite tones in her voice, when, bending her head a little, she puts in some *nuance*. She is the marvel of the ages ! ' (That is why, as I said at the beginning of these recollections, it was so impossible to think of death in connection with her.)

She was very amusing that day. ' But these nice English boys I am so fond of,' she said, ' know little of history. In fact, they know nothing at all ' ; and she told us that when Antonia was showing one of them her *Cabinet de Travail*, he pointed to the full-length portrait by Cabanel of Napoleon III. with the sash of the Légion d'Honneur across his breast, and remarked :

' That's M. Poincaré, isn't it ? '

But even more incredible was the comment of another patient of hers. There hangs at Farnborough Hill a celebrated picture, I think by Bougereau, of Romeo and Juliet—and of course the group is full of amorous suggestion. ' That's the Empress, I suppose ? '

remarked the young officer! Few things ever amused her more than that naïve assumption.

As if to soothe the national pride of Maurice and myself, however, she allowed that Americans are still more hopeless as regards history. She told us that soon after the Philippine war her yacht found itself moored in the harbour of Naples between two American men-of-war, and that both captains were for ever urging her to come on board their vessels. At last she pointed to the rifle-rack and said: 'Well, you see, I could only go on board *with those!*' The captains looked profoundly puzzled; then one of them exclaimed, in a flash of intelligence: 'I have it! I guess you're a Spaniard!' And the Empress said (I should like to have seen her face as she said it), 'Yes, I am a Spaniard.'

It was just after the Armistice was signed that Mr. Steed went down to see her. Under the transparent disguise of 'a Correspondent,' he has told the story of that visit in the *Times*, but one or two of the incidents are so arresting that it is worth while repeating them here.

She had observed that although Clemenceau had always been one of the bitterest enemies of the Second Empire, she could willingly embrace him now, so magnificently had he served France in the hour of her greatest need. Nevertheless she considered he had made a great mistake in not waiving, for the moment, his anti-clericalism, and attending the recent celebration of the Armistice at Notre Dame. 'It would have been a grand lesson,' she exclaimed, 'in union and moderation,' and went on to point out that he could still retrieve his error by attending the similar celebration that was shortly to be held in Strassburg Cathedral. Here Mr. Steed asked her if he might give M. Clemenceau a message to that effect? but she said, 'Non; je suis morte en 1870.'

A few days later Mr. Steed repeated her words, though not as a message, to M. Clemenceau, who remarked : 'Well, she will be disappointed again ; I shall not attend that celebration in Strassburg Cathedral!' But he did ; and what is more, in publicly recounting his impressions of the ceremony he told how he had seen a little old nun softly singing the 'Marseillaise' under her coif, 'which,' he added, 'is a lesson to all of us in moderation and unity.' He may, as Mr. Steed remarks, have forgotten the Empress's words, but there the fact remains.

That day Mr. Steed brought down with him a copy of *Le Journal.* In it was a picture of a woman and her little boy standing beside one of the many battle crosses that were the only crop I saw in the north of France after the war ; and the little boy is saying : 'Mère, est-ce que père sait que nous sommes vainqueurs ?' The paper was lying on a side-table and I called the Empress's attention to the picture, reading aloud the text, which I knew her dim eyes could not decipher. I shall never forget how she gripped my arm in her amazingly strong fingers, and, looking across the park towards the Mausoleum, whispered : 'Je l'ai bien dit aux miens là-bas !'

Another vivid recollection of mine is the account given me a few weeks previously in Paris by her friend and dentist M. Hugenschmitt, of the celebrated letter written to her after Sedan by the King of Prussia, which letter she passed on during the late war to the Archives of France. It was in reply to one from her, in which she had implored him, for the sake of future peace, not to make the mistake of annexing Alsace-Lorraine ; and the point is, that, far from looking on these provinces as ancient German territory, which was the claim put up in later years by the Germans, the King wrote that if they should decide to *annex French*

territory it would not be from any desire to enlarge Germany, 'which,' he adds, 'is large enough already,' but in order to guarantee themselves against future attack by France. Knowing that Clemenceau was one of M. Hugenschmitt's patients, the Empress bade him show the Minister a copy of the letter. Whereupon M. Clemenceau begged that the original of so important a document might be deposited in the Archives.

Together with that letter were others from the Emperors of Russia and Austria which M. Hugenschmitt was also permitted to read; and in returning the packet to the Empress he asked if he might take copies of these as well. 'They are a wonderful justification of Your Majesty,' he added. But the Empress snatched the parcel from him, saying, 'I will have nothing said or done in my own justification. I have long ceased to care about that.' And nothing that M. Hugenschmitt could say would move her from that position.

When I came home I spoke of all this to the Empress who confirmed it in every detail, adding: 'I told Hugenschmitt to impress upon M. Clemenceau that I gave up the letter, not to the *Government*, but to *France*; that I wished it put in the Archives, and that if he chose to use it I could not prevent him!' Watching her proud face, the flash of her eyes that at such moments seemed undimmed, the incredible transformation of an old into a young woman that always happened when she was deeply moved, I could not help wondering if M. Clemenceau would catch the *nuance* of that message. . . .

Afterwards the conversation veered in the direction of William II., who, it may be remembered, had paid her a surprise visit in her yacht years ago, somewhere in the North Sea. She remarked that he had obviously taken pains to make that visit an agreeable one, and

succeeded. I reminded her of what she once told me she had said to him, almost as farewell word : 'For the sake of the principle of monarchy *don't upset any more thrones* !' and we spoke of the downfall of his own throne, utterly without what the Germans call 'Schadenfreude' on her part—that is, pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Speaking of revolutions in general, not of 1870 in particular, she said : 'It is not that your enemies dethrone you, *c'est que le vide se fait autour de vous*' ; and I thought of what Napoleon had written about the battle of Waterloo—'tout d'un coup je me trouvais seul sur le champs de bataille. . . .' That same day she had been reading the account of the cheering of our King at Buckingham Palace : 'It is the most intoxicating sound mortal ears can hear,' she said, and then her face changed suddenly, 'and no one who has not heard it can realise the horror of its *pendant*, the roar of a crowd that has only one desire—to tear you to pieces.'

Sometimes, but not often, the Empress would talk about the Prince Imperial, and no one who ever heard it can forget the piteous fall of the phrase by which she always referred to him, 'mon petit garçon.' The last time I remember her speaking of him was when I came back from Paris last summer, and told her that at that moment every one in France was saying the country was ripe for a Dictator. Rather to my surprise, I noticed she had been meditating this point with reference to her dead son. 'If he had lived,' she said, pausing between the phrases, . . . '*he* had every quality they needed . . . now might have been his chance . . . but I often say to myself I would rather he is dead than think of him as Emperor. . . .'

Then she began speaking of her past experiences, telling me among other things, that when, after the

fall of the Empire, Gambetta came to the front, he informed the Government that he had known nothing whatever about Metz being in danger, whereas the Empress herself had gone into every detail of the investment with him, day by day! But of course the blame was to be hers, and while dragging her in the mud he knew her well enough to count on her silence! It has always made me ache to reflect that many of those who betrayed her must have known her true fibre; but in the moment of danger the legend of the *femme fatale* lay conveniently to hand, and was used to destroy her. 'Not for one second have I ever regretted losing my throne,' she went on, 'to think of *his* perhaps going through it all—de passer par là où j'ai du passer . . . ah!' and her face contracted with an indescribable pain and horror it pierced one to witness. 'Je remercie Dieu que cela, au moins, lui a été épargné!'

When these Recollections were first published, much interest was excited by a curious psychic experience of the Empress's in Zululand, whither she went in 1880 to visit the spot where her son had fallen. When she told me the story I remembered having heard something about it from Sir Evelyn Wood who was in command of the expedition, but in those days I kept no diary, and certain details had distorted themselves in my mind.

I will therefore collate my version with that given by my friend, Lucien Daudet—one of 'les enfants de la maison'—in a Memoir[1] of which, before it finally appeared in book-form, the Empress herself corrected the proofs. She disliked being written about at all, but this particular work gave her great pleasure. And though her weaknesses find no mention here, ('inevitable, but a pity!' as she herself remarked) this is the most

[1] *L'Impératrice Eugénie*, par Lucien Daudet (A. Fayard).

faithful and delicate portrait of her in later years that exists.

When, at length, after many days trekking across the veldt, the expedition was nearing the goal, the Empress begged that instead of pressing on they might pitch camp. The first sight of the Zulus in war-panoply had produced a terrible impression on her, and she wished to brace herself for the last stage. Since many months it was only with the aid of chloral and by inducing physical fatigue that she could win a little sleep in the 24 hours, and at the close of that long sultry day she slipped out of her tent for her usual solitary walk.

It appears that the Prince had a passion for verveine, that to think of 'mon petit garçon' was to think of that scent. Suddenly the air was full of it; so unexpected, so overwhelming was the perfume that the Empress told me she thought she should faint. But it seemed to drag her onwards, and presently, without sensation of fatigue, ever faster and faster, she was following it 'comme un chien sur un piste,' passing over rough, broken ground, pushing through thickets, crossing hidden ravines without conscious effort . . . Then, quite as suddenly, the perfume failed, and with it her strength. She found herself on a hill covered with curious flat stones and knew she could never retrace her path. Presently men sent after her by her alarmed suite appeared and led her back to the camp.

Next day, as they neared the spot where the Prince had fallen, no need to tell her the goal was at hand; she recognised the hill and the stones.

This story is doubly impressive since, as I have said, she was not imaginative, and to all appearance anything but psychic. Yet Mademoiselle Gobert, who used to administer the local charities at Farnborough Hill, tells me that one day the Empress asked who had brought

fresias into the room. And on being informed that there were none, she said :

'Ce n'est pas la première fois que cela m'arrive de sentir des fleurs ; cela veut dire quelquechose.' But nothing particular appears to have happened.

She seems always to have taken interest in Spiritualism, though possibly not more than in any other new departure in unexplored regions, for one remembers the *séances* of the spiritualist Home that took place at the Tuileries, and, I think, caused some scandal at the time. She once made me laugh by saying that in her opinion the spirits invoked by mediums were probably embryonic, undeveloped spirits, since they did such childish things—rapping tables, making chairs walk about, and so forth. I suggested that perhaps the limitations of terrestrial conditions had something to do with it, and that the spirits were obliged to use such means as were to hand in order to attract attention and stimulate investigation—which, I added, they have succeeded in doing, *vide* the Society for Psychical Research. This view—not an original one of course—was evidently new to her, and arrested her attention for the moment, though I expect she speedily relapsed into her own view of the matter, as happens with the old—and not with the old only.

When Home was invited to the palace, she herself decided at the last moment that the *séance* should not take place in her own sitting-room, as originally intended, but in a room at the other end of the building, in which no one ever sat. Ranged against the walls were arm-chairs so heavy that it took two men to move them, and the first thing that happened was that one of these chairs, raising first its front, then its back legs, came lumbering across the room at a good pace towards Home. Then the chair upon which he himself was sitting rose slowly in the air, the Empress and his

neighbour on the other side passing their hands under all the four legs. She also mentioned his having floated out of the window, but I forgot to put down what she said.

While she was holding a *séance* with some other medium a strange incident happened. Bazaine was shut up in Metz at the time, and she asked what exactly was the situation there? A message came through, spelt out by the alphabet: 'Ne répondez pas trop tôt au Général B.; *zizani* entre les généraux' (*zizani* meaning squabbles and disputes). As it was impossible for any communication from Metz to reach the outside world she could not make head or tail of the message; but next morning she read in the *Times* that General Boyer had stolen out of Metz and had passed through Brussels, bearing a letter from Bazaine to herself.

Another spiritualistic story she told me concerned her sister the Duchess of Alba, to whom, as I have said, she was passionately attached. On her way to Algiers, where she had a series of important functions to perform, she stopped in Madrid to see the Duchess, who was ill, and who begged her to tell her straight out whether she was dying—that being her own conviction. The Empress replied that no one seemed to consider the illness serious, even, let alone likely to end fatally. 'She then asked me to promise,' said the Empress, 'that if ever I should consider her to be dying I would tell her so. I thought a moment, gave her the promise, and left for Algiers, fearing nothing.' But while the Empress was in the midst of that ceremonial progress through Algeria the blow fell. A telegram was put into her hand—the Duchess was dead!

Not long afterwards she was at a *séance* where the medium's efforts resulted in a series of extraordinarily stupid communications; and at last one came through, of which the medium remarked: 'This is gibberish;

I can't make head or tail of it.' The Empress examined the message and found it was in Spanish (a language of which no one present but herself had any knowledge), though all the words ran into each other. Gradually she spelt out the equivalent of the phrase : 'Pourquoi ne m'as-tu pas prévenue ?'

Another incident she mentioned concerned an equerry of hers called Rainbeaux, of whom one vaguely knew that long ago his sister had died of the plague. At some *séance* or other the words were rapped out : 'I was quite conscious when you stood at the door.' No one knew for whom this message was intended, and, when interrogated, the spirit gave some queer name—soon after which Rainbeaux left the *séance*. He subsequently told the Empress that when his sister had fallen ill he had hastened to Paris, but found her practically at the last gasp. And as the nurses told him she was unconscious, and that it was useless his going into the room and spreading the infection, he merely glanced in at the door and went away. The name given by the spirit was a pet name of hers occasionally used in the family.

IV

I had never been able to decide in my mind what part religion played in the Empress's life, and on the whole fancied it was a question of principle with her rather than an inward need and a source of consolation and strength. This, too, was the opinion of my dearly-loved friend the late Count Clary, who saw deeply into character, was one of the 'enfants de la maison,' and who simultaneously adored and defied her. He had always been an unbeliever ; but during the course of the long illness that terminated his life two years ago, faith came back to him, and he told me that the joy

and thankfulness expressed by the Empress in her letters made it evident that religion had played the same merciful part in her life that it came to play in his.

She was unexpansive on such subjects, and the last person one would feel tempted to discuss religious experiences with; but as for her supposed 'bigotry,' never was any one more emphatically at the opposite pole.

My first intimation of the fact was in early days during the Adriatic yachting tour, when, in my then High Church zeal, I reminded her that to-morrow was a fast day. 'Vous êtes insupportable!' she said; 'je l'avais totalement oublié! . . . maintenant il faut s'y conformer!' And, like many Catholics, she detested fish, especially Adriatic fish which are not in high repute. She had a horror of the conversion of Anglicans to Roman Catholicism, and I used to maintain that, given the claims of her Church to infallibility, this was a most illogical attitude! But in her the instinct of loyalty to kith and kin snapped its fingers at religious consistency, and she considered that in nine cases out of ten people can get all that is necessary to salvation out of the religion they were born into.

In those early days I used to sing a good deal at the Abbey Church which is attached to the monastery she founded in connection with the Mausoleum at Farnborough; and if Gregorian music were not now compulsory in R.C. churches I would pass on to friends of that persuasion the discovery that 'O Salutaris Hostia' can be made to fit the tune of 'O rest in the Lord' admirably. The organ is in a side chapel, whence the organist, Brother Wilfred, and I commanded a fine view of the acolytes engaged in fencing-bouts behind the high altar with the long hooded sticks used for extinguishing the lights; after which they would pass round to their duties in front of the altar with arms folded reverently across the chest. I was surprised

that Brother Wilfred uttered no remonstrances; but the Empress said it would be indeed strange if 'ces gamins' did not take any available opportunity of relieving the tedium of office. She used to accuse me of religious aggressiveness. Wine always brings out people's main traits, and she declared that after the champagne had gone round twice the Roman Church invariably managed to get into the conversation somehow! It was her way to throw an occasional English colloquialism into her French with variants of her own, and on such occasions the remark would be: 'Now, don't pick up a quarrel!'

In spite of the crimes of D.O.R.A., her love of England and the English was deep and intelligent. She would even insist that our improvidence is the trait of a strong race, confident in its power to face the future—an aspect of that optimism she so greatly admired but used to joke about sometimes. 'If a man were falling from the top of the Monument,' she once said, 'you would hear him exclaiming, as he turned in mid-air: "It'll all come right in the end!"' But she was not prepared to state that optimism was always justified by the event. 'Is your husband jealous?' she once asked one of my sisters. 'Not at all,' said my sister, 'English husbands never are!' 'No!' replied the Empress, 'they always think it's all right, . . . *but it generally isn't.*'

She was fond of pointing out that no nation is less given to prolonged sojourn beside the domestic hearth than the English. 'You are always somewhere else,' she said, 'et voilà le peuple qui ne se lasse pas de chanter à tout propos "'ome sweet 'ome!"' I said: 'Nous nous rattrapons dans la théorie!' and to that she made a reply which I thought very shrewd—that here you have an instance of what foreigners wrongly

call English hypocrisy. 'It is not hypocrisy,' she said, 'it is, as you say, that the English don't mix up theory and practice; as do the French, for instance, with their ideas about equality. Equality is evidently contrary to nature, and they try to make of it a basis of material existence!' *In theory*, as I think I said before, she was more or less of a democrat. But reflecting on her golden sincerity and on her inconsistencies, I remember a certain phrase—part of a prayer that may be found in the preface of H. Brewster's 'L'Âme païenne': 'Faîtes que je me contredise souvent . . . afin d'être simple et vrai!'

If the Empress loved England, England loved her with an intensity of sympathetic understanding which, I think, would astonish many old French friends of hers who had seen her in the possibly fierce, but above all artificial, light that beat about that particular throne, and met her but seldom in the later decades of her life. I used to notice that all who had known the Emperor spoke of him with that particular inflection of voice that conveys the idea of personal affection more unmistakably than many an asseveration; but no such inflection would accompany their reference to his consort, who seems, in those days, to have lacked the quality of inspiring personal devotion. I have heard her say that, in her position, anything in the nature of favouritism would have been inadmissable; and I have no doubt that the same exaggerated conception of the correct official attitude that was to trouble her relations with her son later on, hampered her unnecessarily during her reign.

Certainly the one exception she made was unfortunate. One can well understand that the brilliant Princess Pauline Metternich—*grande dame*, and exponent of that ancient Austrian Court which had so much prestige for the Empress—would be paramount

in the favour of the newly-promoted Sovereign ; when the crash came, however, among those who dropped her without hesitation—who, even in later years, studiously avoided any marked show of attachment and sympathy—was her former great friend. But neither on this point nor on any other did the Empress show bitterness : 'Étant donné les circonstances c'était tout à fait naturel,' she would say. . . . And all the time one knew that she herself would have suffered torture and death rather than even *seem* to fail the fallen.

The human adorable side of her seems but scantly appreciated out of England, and yet I must own that in early days, when she had a Household, more or less, she was not at her happiest in her relations with her Ladies. Here there was nothing human. I do not think that she and Madame Le Breton really liked each other—rather the reverse, though one's impressions were of course indirect. When the latter died, and in her will made absolutely no mention of her Sovereign Lady, the Empress was deeply wounded—and for years there was no mention of Madame Le Breton. But I, who was devoted to both, said to myself that though to omit that name was a strong measure, the testatrix probably had her reasons. And certainly had I been the Empress it would not have surprised me, for if it came to violence of temperament one was a match for the other.

As for the younger ladies whose brief careers as *demoiselles d'honneur* I had an opportunity of watching, I think that the Empress would have disliked them however excellent the qualities they possessed ; and I also came to the conclusion that their presence in the house, which decidedly got on her nerves, was a concession to what she imagined would be the views of the English Court as to a fitting *entourage* for an ex-Empress. Inasmuch as M. Pietri met all her

secretarial requirements she had no use for a *demoiselle d'honneur*, unless to pour out tea, and later on, before Madame d'Attainville practically came to live with her, one or other of a neighbour's daughters used to be telephoned for to do the honours of the tea-table—a far better arrangement, for the Empress always loved young people about her.

If, in the days of the Empire, her choice of a friend seems to have been unfortunate, in later years one could not help marvelling at some of the specimens of humanity she delighted to honour. Of course there are exceptions to all rules, but she, the greatest of great ladies herself, seemed often unable to distinguish between the gentleman and the cad—and their feminine equivalents. In the same way among her own relations it was not invariably the most delightful that she seemed to prefer, nor the cleverest of whose intelligence she had the highest estimate—and though herself compact of integrity, she was fairly easy to take in. A very little trait or action she disapproved of in any one whose fate she considered linked up with hers, whether by relationship or association, would make her blind, or at least indifferent, to that person's other qualities—and, strange to say, the intensest, most disinterested devotion on their part weighed with her but little. I once told her that a whimsical friend of mine had said he was quite aware that his nephews were civil to him with an eye to his testamentary dispositions, and that this trait, far from annoying him, appeared to him natural and not unseemly ; and her comment was : 'Il y a du vrai là-dedans !'

Nevertheless, in one case of passionate and disinterested devotion, she was neither unperceptive nor lacking in sense of its value—the case of M. Pietri. She accepted his chaff in the spirit in which it was intended, as a proof of affection, and was marvellously

patient when, as would sometimes happen under the stress of gout, his rather violent temper overstepped limits. I shall never forget one such occasion, on which she said to him, quite quietly and rather sadly : 'Pietri, vous n'auriez pas parlé de cette façon si j'étais encore aux Tuileries !' In a second he was on his knees at her feet, kissing her hand and begging her pardon, his protestations of remorse and devotion choked by tears. To give an idea of the quality of that devotion, shortly before his last illness he begged that he might be buried under the pathway that leads to the Crypt ; 'Thus,' he said, 'when you go in there to pray beside your dead, your feet will pass over my body.'

One of the bitterest experiences of her life, I truly believe, was a sad little tragedy connected with his death. He was away in Paris when his health suddenly failed, and with it his mind. Possessed by the delusion that the people at his hotel were bent on poisoning him, he was brought back by his doctor to Farnborough Hill ; 'There,' he said, 'near the Empress, I shall get well in a week.' But he did not get well, and, terrible irony of fate, he now became possessed of the idea that she herself was compassing his death.

One day I went over to see him ; he appeared to be perfectly sensible and spoke of her as usual, regretting the trouble his illness was giving, and when I went downstairs I found her waiting to hear how I had found him. Then, weeping, she told me that he had suddenly pointed a trembling finger at her and said : 'Regardez cette femme vétue de noir—cette femme à laquelle j'ai voué tout mon respect, toute ma dévotion, toute ma vie, pour laquelle, à cette heure-ci, je répandrais volontiers mon sang. . . . Et voilà que maintenant quand je suis vieux elle voudrait ma mort—qu'elle donne à son chef l'ordre de m'empoisonner !' She said she had taken his hand, and cried 'Pietri, Pietri !

C'est donc que vous ne me connaissez plus ! Vous ne savez plus qui parle avec vous en ce moment ! ' ; whereupon he lifted his velvet cap from his head, bowed from his arm-chair till the cap touched the ground, and said solemnly : ' Je vous connais bien ! Vous êtes Sa Majesté l'Impératrice Eugénie ! '

The anguish of the Empress at this terrible delusion was painful to witness : ' Vous voyez donc,' she said, ' aucune épreuve ne m'est épargnée ! ' After his death, which was rather sudden, it touched me even more deeply when she said, like a child, ' Tout à la fin il etait bon avec moi ; il m'a baisé la main, me disant de ne pas le quitter. Mais je lui ai dit qu'il fallait qu'il dorme, et une heure après c'était fini.' But in her heart she knew that if any one on earth was sure of her faithful affection—as was she of his—it was Pietri.

They buried him close to the spot he had chosen, and the Empress said : ' Now the last is gone to whom I could speak of the past without having to explain.'

Thinking over her mental equipment, the balance, the depth, the brilliancy of her intellect, the immense amount of common-sense that made her the most invaluable of counsellors, I have often wondered at one trait that would be surprising in a person endowed with less than half her gifts—namely, her liability to *fuss*. I fancy this trait must have been innate, for one remembers that when Queen Victoria attended the Opera in Paris during the Second Empire, it was noticed that she walked straight up to the front of the box and sat down, without looking round to see what her ladies were, or were not, doing—whereas the Empress could not refrain from indicating to both sets of ladies the special chairs they were to sit upon. In later years this undue preoccupation with detail, this conviction

that things had, on the whole, a tendency to go wrong, probably grew on her. Courageous to a fault herself, she was full of terrors for others. If any of her party were motoring, no theory of an ordinary break-down, of a voluntarily extended programme, could prevent her asking every quarter of an hour if they had not yet come back? And though her luncheon visitors from London were invariably taken down to the station in her own car, nothing would persuade her that either they or her chauffeur were capable of calculating time and distance. Half an hour before it was needful she would begin to speed the parting guests, urging that they must not, out of politeness, miss their train; and finally, she would bundle them down to the station, where they were forced to tramp and tramp on the platform till the train came in, for during war-time waiting-rooms were suppressed. One of the greatest joys of the last year of her life was the visit paid to her by her great hero, Field-Marshal Lord Haig—she herself having superintended the decoration of the front door with evergreens. But I am sure she will not have credited her illustrious visitor with sufficient tactical and strategical skill to catch the 3.42 train at Farnborough.

It is perhaps more reasonable that she did not trust English trains to start without giving warning—though this dignified style of departure is practised at the great London termini rather than in the country. I remember once her accompanying me down to Farnborough station, whither I was going to catch a passing glimpse of Lady Ponsonby on her way to Osborne, and how the Empress endeavoured to embrace the traveller from the platform, standing, for safety, so far away from the carriage that my sister and I were privately considering how best to catch Lady Ponsonby in our arms when the inevitable disaster should take place.

It was a most absurd and touching spectacle, one of them so overwhelmed, both of them so affectionate, and all four of us so frightened ; but the scene ended happily.

Of course the Empress was an ardent suffragist. During the fight for the vote I saw little of her ; I think she took two of her long voyages in successive years. Being ostentatiously law-abiding in her sentiments, she disapproved, theoretically, of militant methods. All the same, I cannot but suspect that certain chords in her nature must have responded sympathetically to Militancy. People have said that women's services during the war would have won them the vote without violent methods : the answer to that is, that one could not base one's tactics on an event which none of our most sapient statesmen foresaw. This the Empress allowed, but none the less continued to say : ' Moi, je suis contre la violence, vous savez.' And meanwhile she expressed a strong desire to make the acquaintance of the Militant Leader !

Never have I seen the Empress more utterly bowled over, if I may use the expression, than by Mrs. Pankhurst. The gentle manner, the quiet authority, the immense radical good sense that veils the violence of that fiery spirit, and, I must add, the daintiness and good taste of her clothes, captivated the Empress at first sight, and I was entreated to bring her to luncheon as often as possible. On labour questions she was the Empress's last Court of Appeal, and a dozen times she has said how fantastic it was that under our Constitution no use could be made of so statesmanlike a brain. I said that Ministers would doubtless shrink in horror from the idea of anti-compromise incarnate seated at the council board ; whereupon she shrugged her shoulders and remarked that responsibility begets moderation only

too rapidly; 'Eux-mêmes mettent assez d'eau dans leur vin, il me semble!' she said.

I must add that her feelings of respect and admiration were fully reciprocated, and once or twice when she emitted some view that I knew her visitor disagreed with, I was surprised that Mrs. Pankhurst held her hand from ever so gentle a slaughter. 'I couldn't dispute with her,' she explained afterwards. 'She is large-minded and generous enough in argument as it is.' And, indeed, I never saw the Empress more utterly adorable with any one than she was with Mrs. Pankhurst.

One of the most interesting conversations I ever had with her was last year, about the son of the great Napoleon, the Duc de Reichstadt. Antonia had been showing his death-mask, which is in the museum in the park, to some Spanish visitors, calling their attention to its resemblance with the present King of Spain; and I asked the Empress casually if she really thought the Duc de Reichstadt had been poisoned? This is one of the statements that Count d'Hérisson puts into her mouth in his abominable book 'Napoleon IV.,' and given her cult for the Hapsburgs I thought it unlikely that she had ever said anything of the kind.

The question elicited an extraordinarily interesting reply which I will epitomise.

Long ago, in the days of the Empire, the Empress had made the acquaintance of a certain Count Prokesch, then a very old man, who had been in the Duc de Reichstadt's regiment. He was one of his closest personal friends, and gave her many details respecting the young Duke's life at the Court of the Emperor Francis. Marie Louise was then living in Italy with Count Neipperg, and her son was never allowed to visit her, but occasionally she came to Vienna and saw him

there. His name, of course, was Napoleon, but that word was never uttered, and he was supposed not to know that he was the great Emperor's son.

At this point I asked the Empress if she believed the concealment of such a fact was possible, recalling that a certain illegitimate child at a boarding-school I was at was supposed by our schoolmistress to be ignorant of what was delicately called her 'misfortune,' but, as a matter of fact, knew all about it. The Empress said she imagined it must have been thus with the Duc de Reichstadt, but Prokesch had told her that not a soul about that Court dared to mention the dreadful name of Napoleon even in a dream, so terrific was the ban placed upon it by Metternich. Strange to say, the young Duke was far more beloved and petted by his grandfather than all the rest of the Imperial children, and, as a concession to his passionate love of soldiering, the Emperor gave him one of his most famous mounted regiments of the Guard, and had it re-christened 'The Duc de Reichstadt's Own' (or whatever is the Austrian equivalent of such a title).

Then came a crisis in the life of the unfortunate *Aiglon*; he persuaded the Emperor to come and see the regiment manœuvre, after which he rode up to receive his congratulations, and for a while moved along with the Imperial Staff in a line parallel to that which the troops were taking. Turning his horse to rejoin his regiment, he found that a wide ditch lay between them. He was a very fine horseman . . . 'comme l'a été mon petit garçon,' said the Empress, with the sad, lingering inflection her voice took whenever she mentioned the Prince Imperial, and, setting his horse at the obstacle he cleared it with such dash and grace that moved to sudden admiration the regiment shouted as one man—

'Vive Napoléon!'

This was almost a penal offence; by order of the all-powerful Minister Metternich, the regiment was taken from him and bidden to resume its old name.

From that moment, Prokesch said, the falseness of his position, the hopelessness of his fate, seemed suddenly to dawn upon the young Duke; it was as if some vital chord had snapped. He languished, became a prey to settled melancholy, and the seeds of tuberculosis, which had always been latent, developed so rapidly that the world believed he had been poisoned.

Later on in that conversation the Empress told me that when at the Tuileries she had seen a diary of Marie Louise that was evidently genuine, and from which one gathered that her nature was romantic and sentimental to the last degree. Moreover, she had been brought up to abjure any characteristics or preferences of her own—more so, even, than are other princesses—fashioned, in short, to fit in anywhere. One thing is certain; once she had seen Neipperg, she desired never to hear Napoleon's name mentioned. As for her supposed longing to join him at St. Helena—a touching legend which was put about in defence of that least sympathetic of royal ladies, and, as we know, encouraged by the Prisoner of St. Helena himself—never was anything farther from the truth!

Speaking of other legends such as posterity is apt to weave around certain crowned heads, the Empress once made me laugh about her own mother-in-law, *La Reine Hortense*. We outsiders have always imagined that the life of this deeply-tried Queen was a record of unbroken melancholy, but according to the Empress a gayer, more pleasure-loving nature never existed. The harps and willow-trees were embellishments added by sentimental commentators: 'C'était de son époque,' she remarked, 'il fallait à ce temps-là que toutes les femmes fondissent en pleurs'; and I must add that

the Empress had nothing but sympathy for people who in spite of slings and arrows make the best of things, and get as much distraction out of life as possible.

She herself was one of the most fundamentally serious natures I have ever known, and I cannot imagine that she would ever have found relief from sorrow in what are called 'les distractions.' Fate drove her back, with blow after blow, upon her ultimate reserves, and fortunately these were many and reliable. Without wishing to appear unduly cynical, foremost among them I must place the possession of a very large private fortune. But what must have helped her as much as anything was her inexhaustible interest in life itself, whether abstract questions, history, politics, or the lives of others. She never seemed to me to think of herself at all, not to pity herself, not to consider herself in any way. She endured . . . and went on. I have seen her in all sorts of situations and in various moods; in what I cannot describe as other than the highest spirits, and in what, with equal sincerity, must be called a bad temper. But never once have I heard her utter a mean or ungenerous thought.

Be her weaknesses what they may—and I have never seen any of the slightest consequence—the extreme nobility of her nature, together with her flawless kindness, remain the master impressions. Her manners were perfect because she was never thinking of herself, and was quick beyond belief to guess the feelings of others. If she thought she had given, whether inadvertently or in the heat of argument, the very slightest pain, or even a passing wound to vanity, no trouble was too great for her to take in order to soothe ruffled feelings. And if one had no other friend in the world to whom to turn in trouble, to her one could turn with confidence. All she did was done on grand lines—no hanging back,

no half measures, not the faintest desire for commendation or applause, and very little expectation of gratitude. Her generosity in money matters was unbounded, her charities unlimited,[1] but the world heard nothing of these things. Only the other day I was staggered to learn what immense sums she had given to hospitals in France, both French and Spanish, during the war; but the beneficiaries were sternly forbidden to publish the facts, which both my informant and I thought was a pity.

When the Germans invaded Belgium, the head of the Bonaparte family and his wife were bidden to consider Farnborough Hill their home, and there they, their children, and their servants lived till peace was signed. It was only natural; no one could desire that it should be otherwise. Yet I often wondered how many ladies of ninety would accommodate themselves so simply, naturally, and generously to a situation that changed their habits root and branch. The Empress spoke freely before those in whose discretion she had complete confidence, but in all those five years the only comment I heard escape her lips was perpetual fear that her guests were bored to death, and regret that it was out of her power, given war-time conditions, to do anything to alleviate that boredom.

And all this time a shadow worse than death hung over her, for she was called upon to face the probability of total blindness. She had been one of the most assiduous readers I have known—not of novels, for which she had a contempt as unreasonable as it was adamantine, but of stiff books which most people would have thought twice about tackling. True, she was immensely fond of conversation and of company; but the relations and intimates she was accustomed to receive as guests, year after year, were now out of her reach. For one

[1] The Empress left one million francs to charities in her Will.

thing, Governments discouraged private travelling; for another, there was now no room for guests at Farnborough Hill. Even from such distraction as casual English visitors might have afforded her she found herself debarred, for who had time or petrol for visiting in those days? It may be imagined, therefore, what it meant to her to be deprived of books, and unfortunately she could not bear to be read to; yet no one ever heard her grumble.

Once, when a cold confined her upstairs, I found her and her old maid, Aline, who had been with her at the Tuileries, busy pasting ancient cuttings from newspapers into huge scrap-books. The maid, far more shaky than the mistress but at least in possession of her eyesight, was on all-fours on the floor; the Empress, seated in her chair, was pointing with a stick to the cuttings she wished pasted into a particular place—occasionally, under the influence of an attack of mistrust, insisting on having the whole monstrous book lifted on to the table and seizing the paste-brush herself. But gently, firmly, with Tuileries courtesy, Aline would intervene: 'Non, Majesté, . . . pas comme cela, . . . c'est tout à fait de travers'; and with the same gentle firmness the book would be removed, the brush extricated from the Empress's obstinately clutching fingers, and the former operator would resume operations. Whereupon the Empress would shrug her shoulders. 'Aline croit toujours qu'il n'y a qu'elle pour bien faire les choses!' she would say, and resign herself to the inevitable. The relation between those two always touched and amused me deeply.

Only once do I remember the Empress seeming to pity herself. She had always detested needlework, but now took to knitting comforters and cholera-belts for her wounded officers. I cannot say these efforts progressed very quickly, and the aid of Aline and her

other maid was invoked at the finishing-off parts and other crises. One day when I went into her sitting-room she was busily rolling into a ball a skein of wool that was stretched across two chair-backs: 'Vous voyez à quoi je suis réduite,' she said. It stabbed one's heart to hear her. She knew that, and that is why she never complained.

Of her amazing physical vigour at ninety-three the following adventure will give an idea. She had been going upstairs to dress for dinner, and, arrived at the top, thought there was still a step. Finding none, in order to avoid falling on her face she hurled herself backwards with such violence that she fell down the whole flight, her head bumping on each of its twelve steps. Her rheumatic wrists were slightly sprained and she could not get up, but luckily Antonia and Aline heard her cries for help and picked her up. She hated a fuss being made over her and was not feeling in the least inclined to faint. When, therefore, Aline reappeared with a glass of cognac, she was so provoked, and rejected the stimulant with such emphasis, that it flew over the banisters, glass and all.

Up to a few years ago time had left but little mark on her, and there was no diminution of her beauty—the touching majestic beauty of a once supremely beautiful woman who, if I may again quote Lord Rosebery's dedication, had 'lived on the summits of splendour, sorrow, and catastrophe with supreme dignity and courage.' The face was of the pallor of ivory, the figure full and gracious, and in spite of her rheumatism she was erect and active. But within the last five or six years she became smaller and thinner, also rather deaf, and with the oncoming of blindness she began to stoop; but one always felt it was because she chose to rather than because it was inevitable. And, strange to relate, in spite of her blindness, if some small

catastrophe happened, a tiny crack in a huge plate-glass window, for instance, which it was hoped would escape her notice, the event proved the vainness of that hope. To the last, in moments of fire—and at least one such occurred whenever one saw her—forty years would fall from her like a garment. Forty? That is to understate the case. Let us rather say sixty! Personally, I never got accustomed to this transfiguration, and was amazed afresh whenever it happened.

The very last time I saw her, in November 1919, it was a bright sunny day and she had just come in from the garden. She had on a new hat, and looked so magnificent that I stood astonished on the threshold. Whereupon she cried out, 'Qu'avez-vous donc? Entrez—entrez!' It would have been impossible to give the real reason of that pause, for to her the association of old age and beauty was ludicrous, but an allusion to the loveliness of the hat was well received. That vision was so striking that I recorded the impression in my diary, little thinking it was to be the last. And when in June news came of the success of the operation, I had been counting as never before on seeing her again in a week or two, younger and more radiant than ever in the triumph of her recovered sight!

. . . . . .

Going for the last time through what I have written and considering the lines in the portrait here attempted, I see that I have spoken more than once of the brilliancy of the Empress's intellect, yet seem to have dwelt chiefly on its lapses!

This is inevitable. She wrote no books, and during the years I knew her took no public action. I am aware that M. Marconi was thunderstruck at her grasp of the problems of wireless telegraphy; that M. Santos Dumont, and later on the officers of the Royal Aeroplane Factory, were amazed at her knowledge of their

particular subject. But to say so here does not carry us much farther.

All you can judge by is the class of books she read habitually, how she discussed them afterwards, and, above all, by her conversation, in which it was impossible not to feel the easy power of her brain and the complete independence and *originality* of her points of view.

As for lapses, the spots on the sun are far more interesting symptoms of that monstrous fever-patient's temperature than statistics as to what amount of heat he emits per millionth part of a second.

I have no doubt that readers will be struck, too, by the contradictions in the Empress's personality as described by the present writer.

I cannot help it. They were there. And this, I think is the reason why she has been so imperfectly appreciated,—for the world resents being puzzled. On the other hand the latter part of her life is one strong, clear line that more than redeems the uncertainty of other lines—and this, I believe, is the impress she will be found to have left on the pages of history. Can anything transcend the dignity of that long, iron silence? Can the world ever forget that supreme spectacle of one who knew how to fall?

To those who have known her in all the matchless nobility of her spirit, in all the miracle of her undimmed mental power, this death is not like the passing of a human being. It is as if the Temple at Pæstum had been suddenly overthrown by an earthquake.

Probably she never realised the depths of reverence and affection, the passionate admiration she inspired. She had long since lost the habit of expecting or asking anything for herself, and, as I have said, hers was not an imaginative, tender nature—not one of those in the

house of whose spirit every hearth that blazed in youth holds a flame, even in extreme old age. She stood, and was capable of standing, alone, and it was difficult to do anything for her except, now and again, bring interest and stimulus into her intellectual life. I think she took delight in the devotion of those few she may be said to have been fond of, and among these Madame d'Attainville and Count Joseph Primoli, both of them relations, were prominent. I am certain, too, that she was glad in the knowledge that those whom she had befriended—whether old members of her group like the present writer, or the very last batch of young officers who passed through her hospital—were not ungrateful, and, above all, counted on her as the one friend who would never fail.

Otherwise she had won for herself an independence of sympathy that, if in a certain sense rather inhuman, was counterbalanced by her most human, phenomenal, and tireless pre-occupation with the sorrows and the joys of others. In a word, she had outlived the power of receiving consolation but had become herself the great Consoler.

Possibly that which was, and is, in the hearts of those that loved her may reach her yet, and be of some use to her in the place she has gone to. If one did not venture to believe this, the sorrow of her death would be almost unbearable.

DRISHANE. *September* 1920.

A FRESH START AND TWO PORTRAITS

When, in the year 1894, my father died, our old home was broken up. My mother had been dead three years, my five sisters were married, and my brother, a Cavalry soldier, had more use for ready money than for a non-ancestral mansion with sixteen bedrooms. So Frimhurst was put up for sale, and among the things I bought in with the lump sum left me by my father for that purpose were a beloved revolving dumb-waiter, the handiest shelf of which was, and is, very groggy, and the old schoolroom table beneath which our brother Johnny had taken refuge when Mary and I, aged nine and seven, threw knives at each other, and which is still garnished with the tin-tacks a younger sister drove into its sides and limbs.

As my father had foreseen, I determined to start life on my own, and soon found an ideal eight-roomed cottage in our old neighbourhood, surrounded by fields and woods. What its real name was I never knew; but as there was one special oak-tree standing up on a mound just in front of the house, and as what counts is the only thing that ever need be counted, I called my cottage 'One Oak,' regardless of the fact that there were other obscure oak-trees all along the fifty yards or so of frontage.

My landlady, to whom we already owed the priceless benefit of a recommendation, as 'nice' people, to her country-woman the Empress Eugénie, was an

original, made up in equal parts of happy-go-luckiness and Spanish dignity; a sportswoman too, who apparently drove a phaeton and pair with closed eyes, her eye-lids being so amazingly heavy that one seldom caught a glimpse of the fine orbs beneath them.

She informed me that the house wanted next to nothing doing to it, and when I went to see for myself, I found her tearing off strips of wall-paper with her own hands, while the gardener was doing wonders with a pail of whitewash. Eventually she agreed to call in professional assistance, and by degrees it leaked out that although farm-hands had occasionally inhabited the kitchen and scullery, the latest occupants of the two front rooms had been a pony and a donkey. There wasn't a bell in the house, and such was my innocence—such, too, the spell the place had cast over me—that I meekly accepted her theory that eight-roomed cottages never had bells. Nor were any needed, for that winter the Master of the York and Ainstey hounds gave me a beautifully toned hunting-horn, carried by him during a memorable run, which now became an integral part of the ceremony of laying the table. A very soft blast penetrated the thick wall between dining-room and kitchen—carried even farther according to a well-meaning neighbour, who once observed, 'I know you must be getting on with your opera, for as I pass the house I often hear you blowing away on your trumpet.'

The charms of seclusion are seldom combined with the conveniences of civilisation. Unfortunately the communal main drain stopped some 600 yards short of my house, and on prospecting the garden for the immemorial substitute it was found in close proximity to the well. I never gave this matter a thought till some years later—and even then not because of a typhoid epidemic raging in our neighbourhood, but

because of an incident, of which more presently, that would have made even Robinson Crusoe thoughtful.

Everyone lent a hand when it came to getting into One Oak, and I remember my friend H. B., who disliked physical exertion, being requested to dig a large hole—'large enough to bury a cow' were the exact instructions — wherein the thousand nameless things that accumulate in the garden of an uninhabited house found a last home.

The servant problem seemed likely to present difficulties. It must be someone who did not get on with other servants and therefore preferred solitary service; on the other hand her spirits must be equal to life in a small house where little 'company' was seen, and where the mistress played her own operas from morning till night. But even before One Oak was found, the problem had resolved itself.

Those who have met my mother in 'Impressions that Remained' will readily believe that some of her servants were devoted to her. Not all, for she was liable to violent and unreasonable antipathies. But those she liked returned her sentiments with interest—especially a certain young cook who literally adored her, and who had left us under a cloud some months before my mother's death. She was an exceedingly pretty Devonshire girl named Ford, with wonderful grey eyes, rippling black hair, an exquisite complexion, the smallest and roundest of waists, and both physically and mentally of a suppleness and grace that suggested better breeding than her pedigree would have shown. Her manners, though not those of her class, were perfect; in fact she was neither a servant nor a lady—she was Ford.

The cause of her undoing was a blameless passion for open air, complicated by the selection of a gentleman-cadet from Sandhurst as companion of her rambles

along the banks of the Basingstoke Canal. In answer to my mother's remonstrances she allowed that this sort of thing wouldn't do, and promised it should not occur again. Alas! in the summer months that canal is thick with boating young gentlemen from Aldershot and Sandhurst. Once more she was met under the same compromising circumstances, and it seemed advisable that her services should be transferred to a less exciting neighbourhood. Much to the regret of my mother, therefore—for she was a superb cook—she departed; and that autumn a basket full of mushrooms, gathered in her Devonshire fields, arrived at Frimhurst—guerdon of unaltered good-will. The following Christmas, when my mother died, among the letters received by my father and me, none conveyed a deeper and more touching sense of personal loss than hers.

I never lost sight of her. Every autumn a basket of mushrooms arrived at Frimhurst, (she always seems to have taken her holiday in the mushroom season) and with them ever-renewed assurances of her affection for me and mine. Nevertheless I was surprised, one April day in 1894, to get a letter telling me that she had seen my father's death in the papers, and that should it be my intention to set up house for myself she wished to come and do for me, no matter how small the wages I could offer. To live with my mother's daughter and dear Marco (my big yellow dog) would make her happier, she said, than any other fate she could look to.

Now Ford was earning high wages, and though she did not as a rule hit it off with her species, being of a different fibre, she dearly loved coping with garden-parties, dinner-parties, and anything that brought her genius into play on a large scale. For this and other reasons I doubted whether an unrelieved duet with no chorus would appeal to her. But she would take no denial, and duly arrived in time to throw herself

enthusiastically into the work of making One Oak the adorable little place it soon became.

She instantly revealed herself as the ideal general servant, and if the place had been her own could not have taken greater pride in it. Except my mother I have known few people so devoted to flowers, and the house was always full of them, though where they came from I thought best not to enquire. For my garden was never very grand, a row of stocks under the windows, a crimson rambler over the porch, a few creepers, and two round beds dedicated to the mid-Victorian combination of geraniums, calceolarias and lobelias (from which I emancipated myself later on) being the extent of my floral achievements. In the winter she would scour the lanes for belated bramble sprays or anything else decorative, and never came home empty-handed.

Her relations with Marco, which at Frimhurst had been tender but fugitive, now became continuous and passionate. Everything about him enchanted her, his fierce reception of the tradesmen, his marked friendliness towards tramps, and other points that one would not select for admiration. Sometimes, especially when another dog was barking in the neighbourhood, he would wolf his food, after which a kind of stately, subterranean hiccough would afflict him. On one such occasion I remember her putting her head on one side and exclaiming sentimentally : 'Hark at him breaking wind like an old man !'

As for her cooking, whether from the point of view of economy or greediness, how shall words describe it ? We know what Schubert has done with three notes on a posthorn, or a nasal little fragment of a phrase ground out on a barrel organ. Ford's genius was of the same quality. She would make superb soup out of two claws of a grouse, or an old mutton-chop bone, in short out of anything or nothing, flavouring as only

genius knows how. As for the simpler achievements that defeat the incompetent—boiled potatoes, for instance, or pancakes—everything her hands touched became a work of art, whether it was food in a dish or flowers in a vase.

Occasionally, on birthdays maybe, or in honour of some musical event successfully pulled off, I would ask a friend or two to supper; my neighbours the Furses, for instance, (Charles Furse, the beloved painter—perhaps the most courageous human being I have known except Katherine his wife) and my sister Nina Hollings and her husband who lived close by. Maurice Baring sometimes came to dine and sleep, and if he happened to be in England of course H. B. was of the party. Then Ford was in her glory and my guests were astonished at the delicate fare set before them; for One Oak was not an establishment to rouse great expectations.

It was in connection with one of these little festivities that my attention was called to the water supply. Having no cellar I used to cool the wine, which generally was H. B.'s contribution to the feast, by sinking it in the well for a few hours. But one day the pail brought an unspeakably loathsome object to the surface—a limp, slimy bladder in two sections, suspended by a sort of Siamese-twin connection round the neck of a champagne bottle.

I said nothing to the company but decided to have the well cleaned out next day; and it was then discovered that not only was it badly in need of it, but also that its bottom was a foot lower than that of another excavation I have mentioned; also that in the opinion of the expert the strata ran at an unfavourable angle. Evidently this last disquieting circumstance was not perceptible to profane eyes, for I could see no sign of any strata at all; and as the analysis of the water proved

to be surprisingly satisfactory, and as the object looked more like some very repulsive kind of inland seaweed than an egg-layer, no further steps were taken. If a submarine monster it may have been a microbe destroyer, and 'handsome is that handsome does.' Perhaps too much fuss is made about drinking water; anyhow I never had a single severe illness while at One Oak.

Only once did Ford fail me—the occasion on which the Duchess of Connaught, who, with the Duke, had always been wonderfully kind to my parents, drove over from Bagshot to see my new home. In deep but controlled excitement Ford duly brought in tea at the right moment; but what was my mortification when tea and milk flowed simultaneously into H.R.H.'s cup! In her agitation the tea-maker had reverted to School-Feast traditions—a striking instance of the devastating effect of Royalty on loyal British nerves.

She bore the loneliness of our life heroically for the first year, although now and again there were symptoms of low spirits, particularly when one of my periodical absences was imminent, or just concluded. She was one of those people predestined to unfortunate attachments, and I often fancied that my return coincided with the funeral of a cherished dream.

Once I came back to find that the two white cane chairs in the spare bedroom had been painted vermilion, whereas the kitchen ones were now particoloured, their backs being vermilion, some of their legs white, and the other legs half white and half red. In response to my cries of horror Ford explained that she had been 'feeling low,' and having come across two pots of Aspinall's paint in a cupboard, had endeavoured to give her surroundings a more cheerful aspect. Asked why she had stopped half way she replied that the paint had run out, and that her spirits had not been equal

to getting more from Camberley. And thus the chairs remained—a depressing monument to depression.

At the end of her first year with me a great event happened, she was invited to the Christmas Ball given by the Empress's servants. I dined that night at Farnborough Hill, and after dinner the whole party went to look at the dancing. Ford was a vision, and while watching her graceful movements and entrancing smile, the Empress remarked that here was evidently one result of the Spanish Armada, which, so we are told, came to special grief on the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. 'Who but a Spaniard' she exclaimed 'could wear that rose above her ear just as your servant wears it!' This compliment I afterwards passed on to the wearer, and she lived on it for a month.

But as time went on, the fits of depression becoming deeper and more frequent, I began to suggest that having seen me well into my career as householder she ought to give some less lonely place a trial. The answer was always the same . . . tears, and an assurance that she could not bear to leave me and dear Marco. At length, after a rather long absence, I came home to find her plunged in such depths of gloom that I determined to call in bald, grey-bearded Dr. Vaudrey, who was a humorist, a student of human nature, and as kindly a man as ever breathed.

I was out when he came, but caught him as he was stepping into the low pony-chaise in which he used to drive himself about the country at the rate of four miles an hour. It was one of those vehicles that lock when you turn round and have been well styled 'infernal machines.'

'There's nothing at all the matter with her' he said 'except low spirits. I'd send her away if I were you.'

'But she won't go' I objected.

'Then my advice is . . . *take her out for a walk*

and lose her!' said Dr. Vaudrey, whipping up his pony.

About a fortnight later, after a period of ceaseless tears, she herself agreed that a change of scene was advisable. I found her a splendid place, engaged a caretaker, (for I was just off abroad again) and in mutual love and sadness we parted.

When I came back Dr. Vaudrey told me the following story.

A few days before I had cited him to One Oak, a certain young officer belonging to a Scotch regiment stationed at Aldershot had casually asked him whether he knew Miss Ethel Smyth, and if so what kind of person she was? 'I told him you were a patient of mine, and *quite mad*,' said Dr. Vaudrey; whereupon the officer related that he had seen me one day coming out of the Empress's park-gate, that he had got into conversation with me, walked home with me, and since then had had tea at One Oak once or twice; 'in fact,' he added with a smirk,' we are now on *kissing terms*!'

'Now I didn't think,' the doctor went on, 'that your madness takes that particular form, so I asked him to describe your appearance.' In glowing colours the young man proceeded to paint a picture of . . . Ford, specially dwelling on a costume which I recognised as my new summer gown! Dr. Vaudrey said he went off into fits of laughter and exclaimed: 'My dear fellow, you've been making love to the cook!'; whereupon the young man got scarlet and indulged in language such as mingled fury and humiliation would be likely to inspire.

Poor Ford! The defection of this admirer, whom Dr. Vaudrey described as 'rather a sweep but what is called a gentleman,' was evidently the last straw. Of course she never learned that the affair had come to my ears, and until the curtain fell on her troublous career a few years later we kept in touch with each other. And

never did the basket of mushrooms fail to turn up in due season.

. . . . . .

Before abandoning my cottage to a caretaker's mercies I had been far too busy to think about the future, and inasmuch as a still more strenuous period would surely follow there would be no time to go servant-hunting on my return. Thus it came that I committed the inconceivable folly of engaging a new 'general' without having seen her, and, what is more, without any testimony save her own as to her character and accomplishments! She was Scotch however, and this I considered a guarantee of all the virtues,—love of hard work, thrift, honesty, and common-sense. Above all I counted on a temperamental seriousness such as would safeguard even a younger woman than she claimed to be against sentimental weaknesses *à la* Ford.

She arrived, a gaunt Highlander 5 ft. 11 in. in her stockings, and shall be dismissed in a paragraph proportioned to the length of her sojourn at One Oak. Among my pleasanter recollections of her are a few trenchant phrases; one a remark, in connection with Marco's meals, that she had not been engaged 'to feed the beasts of the field,' and another, in reply to a request to scrub the kitchen floor, that she 'wouldn't go down on her knees for anybody.'

The end of it was that one day when he drove over to luncheon with me, poor H. B., who was the most peace-loving of individuals, and more averse to scenes than anyone I ever met, was warned that he might have to lift her bodily into his cab, inasmuch as she flatly refused to leave the premises till her month was up. A pacific nature thoroughly aroused to fury is a nerve-shattering spectacle; and when at last, deaf to his mild reasonings, the Highlander became outrageously abusive, he suddenly rushed at her with such

ferocity that she fled into the cab of her own accord. And that was the end of Mrs. McPherson.

My domestic troubles now appeared to me insurmountable. Bereft of Ford there seemed no further possibilities in this world. So I gladly fell in with a suggestion of my married sisters to plant myself out on them till my work was finished. Being in a state of temporary penury I decided, too, to let the cottage for a couple of months, nailing a home-made announcement to that effect on the salient oak-tree—whereby agents' fees were evaded.

A client at once presented himself in the person of a beautiful young man with the best cut pair of riding breeches I had ever seen. He informed me that he was by way of going to the Staff College, and wanted just to see what the lectures were like beforehand ; hence he was looking for a small house wherein to install himself, his wife, and his wife's pugs for a couple of months —possibly three, if, when the time came, it should suit us both to extend the let.

In those days I knew nothing of the procedure of houseletting ; but as he was such a very charming-looking young man, and as he produced handfuls of sovereigns from the pockets of those wonderful breeches (whose sides, to quote O. Henry, resembled the variations on a typhoid chart) and proposed to pay the first month's rent then and there, I closed with him eagerly, merely scribbling a rough agreement and suggesting that the rest of the rent be paid, when due, into my account at the Camberley bank.

Now inasmuch as that extra month's let might turn out to be very convenient, there could be no harm in making the young couple's stay as pleasant as possible ; so I asked both my sister and the clergyman's wife to call. For in those days country people really

did call on each other, and neighbourliness, though not observed by a solitary and busy individual like myself, was counted a virtue, not a madness.

My sister is one of those correspondents whose replies to your letters invariably fail to arrive. Thus it was not till some months later that I learned how she had knocked and thumped at the door, the pugs meanwhile barking furiously behind it, and how at length, giving it up as hopeless, she had gone away, and, looking back from the road, had caught sight of a lady in elegant but extreme *déshabillé* peeping out of an upper window. This at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

The experiences of the clergyman's wife had been still more remarkable. As she approached the house she was amazed to see two huge powdered footmen playing leapfrog on the lawn, the idea being that the first frog had to clear one of the round geranium beds and then double up like lightning, whereupon the other frog rushed round and performed the same feat over the second bed. As soon as it was possible to attract their attention Mrs. Basset pressed a visiting card on them and retreated hastily.

I omitted to enquire afterwards whether these gorgeous creatures slept at the White Hart, or whether, like the attendant genii in Eastern fairy-tales, they only materialised when wanted—aerial pledges of my tenant's love for the lady behind the curtains. Anyhow there was not room for even a page-boy at One Oak.

The let duly lasted for three months, and when I came home my first action was to remove from my sacred piano a song entitled 'Tommy's tickling Totty' —property of one 'Babs,' whose handwriting was more remarkable for size than symmetry. The next step was to charter a donkey cart, whose owner was good enough to take away the stack of empty champagne bottles found behind the wood-shed.

Later on came the far more difficult task—and strange to say it was eventually accomplished—of extracting two months' unpaid rent from my late tenant's lawyer, the young man himself, as so often happens, being unfortunately abroad at the moment. The lawyer informed me that his client had run through one large fortune, but was on the point of coming into another (which I was glad to hear); also that 'Babs,' the person mainly responsible for the melting away of fortune No. 1, was not his wife but a Music-Hall star whom the lawyer thought I must surely have heard of. I had not—but on the other hand I have never forgotten her.

Meanwhile the domestic problem was still unsolved, and though I doubted whether a cottage owner were not too small fry to get much attention from the potentate who for years had fed Frimhurst with servants, I applied to Mrs. Hunt's Agency and in due course went to London to inspect a few selected applicants. None of them appealed to me, but just as I was going away in despair I was told that another woman had come in whom Mrs. Hunt thought I might as well see. It appeared that she was now caretaking for the Hon. Mrs. X., but before that had been engaged as cook; 'not at a very grand place,' said Mrs. Hunt, 'in fact it was at some eating-house for sailors down at Portsmouth, but she's a nice-spoken woman who has seen better days.' And presently in walked one of the supreme people I have met in my life, the servant who was with me for 16 years, wonderful, adorable Mrs. Faulkner! Before we had exchanged a dozen words my mind was made up. Have her I must.

She was about 40 then, and must have been very pretty in her youth—a sad, pale, well-cut face, and fair hair with a wave in it, worn in the old fashioned *bandeaux* style. She told me she had been brought up on Lord

Bandon's Irish estates, where her father had been steward, and that her husband, after sadly mismanaging his affairs, had gone off with all the cash he could lay hands on, leaving her penniless with four little children. It had been a hard struggle, she said, but things were better now, and she was looking out for a quiet place.

I asked her what her husband's line of life had been and how he had come to grief, whereupon she informed me that he had 'failed in the water-cress business.' Never had I heard of such a business, but now I learned how a rich man's factory may poison streams, and do worse than kill the fish in them. She told me that she had been in service as housemaid when a young girl, and feared she was a poor hand at cooking ; I said that was of no consequence, and that her youngest boy could clean my boots and bicycle. The matter was settled in five minutes.

I then begged my sister's cook to grill a chop before my very eyes ; also to tell me what should be done with eggs and potatoes, how to make an eatable rice pudding, and so on. This knowledge was subsequently imparted to Mrs. Faulkner, who, though devoid of inventive genius, could, and did, exactly follow instructions ; and that was all that was required.

Everyone who saw her fell in love with her, I think. I never heard a sweeter, gentler voice, and her manners were those of the old-world servant, respectful and self-respecting. The eldest daughter was engaged to be married, and a good place was easily found for the second—one of the dearest, prettiest girls imaginable. The eldest boy, a mild young fellow very like his Mother, was urged, and eventually aided by me, to enlist in the 9th Lancers ; and the youngest, after faithfully dealing for a few months with the One Oak boots and bicycle, passed into the stable of three dear old maiden-ladies of property who lived opposite. Later on, being, as his

mother put it, 'wild about horses,' he obtained a post in the Duke of Grafton's racing stable.

It was while this planting-out business was in progress that one day I found Mrs. Faulkner quietly weeping. An old sore on her leg had broken out again; she had said nothing, but this meant good-bye to her chances of earning a livelihood. Again and again in my life has the Empress come to the rescue, and this time it was with a nomination for the Guildford hospital. Six weeks later Mrs. Faulkner came back to me, completely cured, after what I suspect was the first rest she had had for years and years.

She told me that she had been very happy at the hospital; that they had offered her books but that she was 'quite pleased to lie quiet,' especially since the nurses had shifted her bed so that she could look out of the window. 'I think they were satisfied with me,' she said, 'for being so contented,' and I can well believe it.

To think of her as element in a household is an anodyne to restlessness. She did her work as noiselessly as a ghost; no stumpings about overhead in precious early working hours; no fantasias on saucepans and fire-irons in the kitchen; no percussion effects with the oven-door; no distractingly cheerful *badinage* with the baker. Silence seemed her medium rather than speech, and as I was what is called 'all nerves' in those days, this state of things was heaven.

Her only fault was that she didn't like dogs. I have had three since the Frimhurst days; Marco, a hybrid St. Bernard; Pan I, an Old English sheep-dog; and Pan II, my present dog, distant cousin and living image of Pan I. And all these three have been trained to combine the wildest of spirits with perfect amenableness to discipline, an ideal which can be achieved in a household of two. But Mrs. Faulkner, who had no authority with 'beasts of the field,' and whose bad leg was the

result of terrible varicose veins, naturally dreaded the rushings and boundings of large animals, and concentrated her affections on the cat. I once lent One Oak to my sister Violet, who brought with her a dreadful little dog, property of a friend who was too tender-hearted to put it down. It was old, stout, deaf, blind, and idiotic, but Mrs. Faulkner liked that dog; 'he was a nice quiet little thing' she said.

A great bond between us was our common love of what is called a dull life. A 'change,' the ideal of most servants, was abhorrent to her, as I found out when I took her with me, as a great treat, to stay with my brother-in-law Charles Hunter and his wife. The scale of life in the Hunter establishment frightened her; also the fact of my dressing for dinner—a ceremony not observed at One Oak—and the duty that devolved on her of putting out various garments she had never seen before. I am sure the servants were kind to her—no one could be otherwise to Mrs. Faulkner—but she was shy with them, and deeply relieved when I sent her home, myself proceeding to Scotland in diminished state.

And yet that tranquil spirit harboured dreams—or perhaps she dreamed for her children. Once when I was abroad, H. B. and his daughter went to live at One Oak, and one day Clotilde Brewster, going suddenly into the kitchen, found her busy drawing. The picture was hastily pushed under a newspaper, and when, in an agony of scarlet shyness, she was persuaded to draw it forth, lo! it turned out to be an amorous scene! Bolt upright upon a sofa sat a soldier all stripes and buttons, and if his arm, instead of encircling the young lady who sat beside him, was stiffly extended behind her back, it was doubtless because the artist had not felt equal to foreshortening.

When one considers how many legends spring up

under our very eyes, it is impossible not to ask oneself how much of history has been put together in the same haphazard fashion. This reflection is induced by my remembering that years afterwards in Rome, discussing Mrs. Faulkner, H. B. remarked casually 'how amusing that incident was, her sitting quietly in the kitchen and drawing a girl and a naked man seated together on a sofa!' Thus had the incident shaped itself in his memory!

Montaigne, one of the few men who understand friendship as women do, says somewhere that he could have spent his life writing about his dead friend La Boëtie. I could spend mine writing about H. B.; but here I will only say that he was an indulgent student of human nature, whose motto might have been 'You never can tell!' and who certainly took special interest in what goes on at the other side of the moon. When I protested with indignation that Mrs. Faulkner was less capable of such a flight of fancy than any soul on earth, I think he believed me, but a shade of disappointment passed over his face.

Maybe it was that sketch that made me wonder whether my servant ever yearned after the absconded water-cress merchant. 'Perhaps your husband is still alive,' I remarked one day, 'and may turn up again.' Her rejoinder effectually dissipated foolish sentimentality: 'I hope not, Miss,' she said, in her pleasant, even voice, 'he used to beat the children something cruel.'

Another occasion for a display of this soothing and characteristic matter-of-factness was the appearance above my house of one of the earlier military air-ships—'Beta' I think was its name. The shape of this inflated object was far from graceful, but with the rays of the setting sun gilding its delicate sheath, it looked, as a sister of mine remarked, like a bit of the Milky Way broken loose. Ford would have gone into ecstasies over it, so I summoned Mrs. Faulkner from the kitchen and

asked her if it was not a beautiful sight? 'Yes, Miss,' she said, 'it looks just like a pig.' And when Violet and I could not help laughing at this strange encomium she looked shy and puzzled.

One of her great charms was that you never knew how a thing would take her. Just to see her face I once repeated to her the most exquisite bit of flattery that has ever come my way—the flatterer being a disreputable old Italian landlady of mine, whose parting words were: 'È una vera signora Lei—libera, aristocratica, *pulita*!' 'Do you know, Mrs. Faulkner,' I said, 'that an old Italian woman once told me I must be a real lady because I was free in my ways, aristocratic, and *clean*!' Mrs. Faulkner's comment did not disappoint me. 'O dear,' she said, 'fancy anyone daring to speak to you like that!'

If she was devoid of romance as regards her husband, she worshipped her children, to whom I well know all her savings went though she never would allow it. And specially did she love her youngest girl, who became engaged to the smartest corporal in her brother's regiment, a great cricketer, a fine shot, and winner of most of the regimental competitions. He and his bride came to One Oak before they went to India, and I remember poor Mrs. Faulkner saying 'I am informed that India is a splendid place for a young cavalry soldier.' She used stately language of the kind sometimes.

About a year later I was working 10 to 12 hours a day. It was one of the many times in my life when, rightly or wrongly, I believed that everything depended on being ready by a certain date, and no one had greater respect and consideration for dogged diligence than Mrs. Faulkner. I was astonished, therefore, when one day, without knocking, the door burst open, and in she came with a dazed look on her face that frightened me. 'Will you please to read this,' she said tremulously, 'I can't understand it.' It was a telegram from some station in

India, and silently I read the words : 'Lizzie dead, baby alive.' Alas ! I seemed to remember that her daughter's name was Elizabeth . . . 'Who is Lizzie ?' I asked in dread. And never shall I forget that strange broken cry of hers . . . 'It's my daughter !'

I uttered the impotent words it was possible to say, but almost immediately she was herself again, quietly thanking me for my sympathy. And O imperishable memory ! an hour later when I went into the kitchen to see how it was with her, she said: 'I am very sorry this should have happened when you are so busy.' Can anyone recall, in a whole lifetime, an incident more poignant, more heartrending ?

In after years another great sorrow befell her. One dark night her youngest boy, now high up in the Duke of Grafton's stable and a beautiful horseman, was run over and killed by one of those motorists who drive on without stopping. Next morning the body was found at the side of the road, cut to pieces. But I think the loss of her daughter was the supreme grief of her life.

Our relations were curious ; no intimacy in a certain sense and no demonstrations, but silent respect and affection that I hope was mutual and that grew as the years went on. We hardly ever spoke to each other on side issues. She would not have considered it seemly. One day, however, when the very last bar of 'The Wreckers' had been written, in my exhilaration reserve was cast overboard for once. 'Do you know my Opera's *finished* !' I said. She met this strange outburst with obvious embarrassment and a soft, shy 'O indeed Miss !' But I was far too excited to be checked, and seeing that for nine long months that music had been shaking the house to its very foundations I couldn't help adding : 'By this time I should think you must know it pretty well by heart !' She now realised that an effort to rise to a unique occasion was required of her;

'Yes, Miss,' she said '. . . some of the soft parts are very pretty I'm sure.'

Immortal pronouncement that doubtless sums up the feelings of a large percentage of concert-goers! Many a time, when inclined to morose reflections after listening to some tumultuous piece of modern music, I bethink me of Mrs. Faulkner and murmur to myself in a spirit of justice: 'Some of the soft parts were very pretty I'm sure.'

During the Boer War her soldier son was at the front, but my impression is that she seldom if ever scanned the lists of the slain and wounded. Her view was that 'what had to be would be'—no use therefore in fussing. When he came home again she said: 'I ought to be very thankful he's safe.' That was all. Of course he came to see her at once, and it was difficult to recognise in the grave, hard-bitten soldier I found sitting in the kitchen the gentle young fellow I had known years ago, more anxious to please than otherwise remarkable.

His regiment had done splendidly, and in discussing the War with him I was anxious to find out indirectly what the men thought about the officers; for it will be remembered that the art of taking cover was then in its infancy, and War Correspondents were for ever reporting cases of unskilful or fool-hardy leading. After accepting the incontrovertible statement that some officers are good and some bad, I came to close quarters. 'What did you do,' I asked, 'if some young officer from Sandhurst, who, you could see, knew nothing about it, ordered you to do some very foolish thing?' I confess that the answer rather took my breath away. Quietly and as a matter of course, with exactly his mother's smile and manner, he said: 'O, then we didn't obey.'

. . . . . .

As its title indicates, this group of memories concerns a new page only. I do not propose to turn the

following pages here, but should like to wind up the accounts of the three chief personages connected in my mind with those early days at One Oak, namely, Ford, Mrs. Faulkner, and Marco.

Ford died in the latter half of the One Oak period. Coming home one day from abroad I found a letter from the Matron of a Bath Hospital, dated three days previously, telling me that a former servant of mine had been brought in, suffering apparently from tumour on the brain, and that just before she became unconscious she had begged that I might be written to. 'I know she'd like you to tell her I am here,' were her words. I telegraphed to say I would come at once, but almost immediately a second letter arrived saying she had died without recovering consciousness.

'If only I had been there!' is a refrain that accompanies most people through life. But in the case of that strange, gifted creature, so lovable and so lonely, it has always had for me a peculiar sadness.

There has been little mention of Marco in these pages, but he was so thoroughly appreciated in all his greatness by those who met him in my Memoirs that perhaps I may be pardoned for playing *The Last Post* over him here.

I have said that he became ferocious and nerve-rasped in his old age, and about a couple of years before the end he actually turned one day on a member of the class he specially favoured—a particularly disreputable and truculent tramp whose trouser-leg he tore from the knee downwards.

The hullabaloo that ensued at the back door drowned the music in the front room. Rushing to the scene I collared him, shut him up in the scullery, and faced the eloquence of the tramp.

His demands were categorical; either a new pair of trousers or a sovereign. I answered that a couple of solitary women could not well produce a pair of trousers, and offered half a crown, which well met the needs of the case but was contemptuously rejected—in fact hurled with great violence to the ground. And all this time Marco never ceased barking for one second.

I then went into the house, to reappear presently with a large and threaded needle; whereupon the tramp put up his leg on an empty box, and pointing to the rent said imperiously, 'You mend that!' I may add that he wore no stockings.

This proposal, which would have shocked Mrs. Faulkner inexpressibly had she not long since shut herself up in the kitchen, made me so angry, that a drama with a sympathetic part in it for Marco was hurriedly arranged. Picking up the half crown I placed it on the box together with the needle. Then, flinging the door wide open, I seized my collaborator by the scruff of the neck, and advised the tramp to make himself scarce as I could not hold back the dog long. Marco, whose intelligence was unearthly, no doubt knew that the whole thing was make-believe; but so convincingly did he play his part that the tramp made a plunge at the box, and Mrs. Faulkner, now stationed at an upper window, was the gratified spectator of his wild rush for the gate.

Later on the postman said he had seen a man sitting on a bank a good way down the road, mending his trousers and talking to himself. Asked what he had been talking about, the postman said he had not caught his remarks—which was a pity.

Alas! Marco did not transfer his favour, as in logic bound, to our tradesmen, and his aversion to a certain butcher boy perhaps accounted for the tragedy that happened shortly afterwards. One day when this young

brute called, he had a specially unfriendly, not to say alarming, reception, and after flinging my chop in at the kitchen window he had gone away in a cloud of violent language, not improbably seen off the premises by Marco. All of which details were subsequently gleaned from Mrs. Faulkner.

Looking up presently from my work I was horrified to see Marco lurching and tumbling across the lawn in the strangest manner, with a huge bleeding lump on his head ; and though as a rule the tradesmen were glad enough to shut the gate once they were safely in the road, on this occasion it was open. It is possible that a passing motor may have touched him, but Mrs. Faulkner always believed it was the vengeance of the butcher boy. She declared she had heard things . . . but I never really knew what had happened.

He recovered more or less, but it was pathetic to see him tumble down when trying to be a 'mad dog' (*i.e.* rushing round in circles), though I daresay it depressed me more than it did him. Gradually his body assumed a strange curve, as if his head and one hind leg were tied together. Nevertheless he seemed well and happy, though Charles Furse used to say that to walk from my wicket to the front door, accompanied by a huge yellow thing shaped like a comma that growled uninterruptedly, and whose nose was literally laid against the calf of your leg, was a severe test of nerve. He knew he wouldn't be bitten—Marco never actually bit anyone, I think—it was merely that the whole thing was so fantastic and terrifying.

He was 16 years old, a great age for a big dog, when I felt that the hour for parting had struck at last. Lethal chambers did not exist in those days, but his end was instantaneous and painless. Goodness knows it was not in a spirit of irony that I buried him in the wood which for two years had practically been the home of

the cat, so pertinaciously did he hunt her out of the house. It was only that cemeteries do not appeal to me, least of all a dogs' burying ground in a garden.

Mrs. Faulkner left me a year or two after I had migrated to Woking. I even urged her to go ; partly because I knew that general service, which involves being on your legs nearly all day long, had become too much for her, but mainly because I guessed she was yearning to be near her only surviving daughter who lives at Southampton. Determined to earn her own livelihood as long as it shall be possible, she takes easy jobs in those parts, resting at her daughter's house during the intervals ; and while writing these pages I have fixed up a meeting with her a week hence, on the quay where the Havre-Southampton boat reluctantly disgorges its victims.

La Roche-Posay. *July* 1920.

TWO GLIMPSES OF QUEEN VICTORIA

In the summer of 1891, my father and myself being now the only members of the family left to inhabit our old home, Frimhurst, I was searching England for a conductor bold enough to produce a big choral work by a little-known native composer. It was a Mass for solo voices and chorus which, so far, existed in pianoforte score only. But this was of no consequence, for when my first orchestral compositions had been performed in the previous year the instrumentation had been specially commended. So I knew I should be trusted on that point.

One has heard of young ladies who keep a proposal list, though never, I think, of a man who keeps a refusal list. I wish I had kept one. I wish I had counted how many shots are aimed at that pigeon of one's dreams, a perfect performance, to bring down in the end perhaps one wretched, mangy crow of a scramble-through! It is for my own satisfaction that I wish such a record existed, for whether its perusal would depress or encourage other sportsmen is a matter hard to decide.

As regards the Mass, however, one refusal is indelibly engraved in my mind, because of a scene connected with it—a scene such as can only happen in a country full of originals like England.

The protagonists were a chorus conductor and his wife, whom I will call Mr. and Mrs. James Harvey.

Mr. Harvey was a capital musician, a wag, no fool, and one whose histrionic talent would surely have made the success of any private theatricals. I may add that though a devoted husband he practised an elegant and (I believe) blameless gallantry towards the other sex. Mrs. Harvey, though by no means in her first youth, still considered herself a *charmeuse* in the warm, lavish tea-gown style, and was not averse to letting the world know that in spite of James's ingratiating manners with the ladies he was fast in the thrall of her dangerous fascinations. In short she was one of those women my friend Mrs. Robert Crawshay once described as 'easy to *live* with but difficult to *reside* with!'

My appointment was at 9.15 A.M., and for an hour the house rocked and rang, as houses do when composers are playing their own works, after which James and I sat together for a while discussing possibilities.

Suddenly the door burst open and Mrs. Harvey appeared, clad in a flowing purple garment mitigated with white *chiffon* and lace that must have hampered her morning excursions in the basement. For the Harveys lived in a small way, and I had heard that this fatal Helen was a first-rate housekeeper.

Pausing in admirable confusion on the threshold, she remarked with rallying coyness:

'Ow, James! . . . I didn't know you were still closeted with Miss Sm*ei*the!' (She pronounced the name to rhyme with *scythe*.)

James got up and struck an attitude.

'And pray, my dear,' he asked dramatically, in accents of outraged tenderness, 'is that any reason why I should be defrauded of my morning salute?'

Mrs. Harvey advanced reluctantly—a picture of womanly modesty overborne by the passion of the male—and delicately presented her right ear. Thereupon James thundered:

'Your *LIPS*, madam, if you please!' and with a side-glance in my direction, as much as to say, 'It has to be!' she yielded her ample lips, red lip-salve and all, to her slave.

Unfortunately I never met the Harveys again, for, as I have indicated, my Mass was not accepted by the Committee of that Choral Society, though I think James really wanted to produce it.

In 'Impressions that Remained,' speaking of our kind friend and neighbour the Empress Eugénie, I mentioned that she had always been interested in the efforts of women to overcome sex-prejudice, and had taken action during the Second Empire towards that end. It was about a year after my career as public musician began that I came to know her well, and from the very first she followed my proceedings with the greatest sympathy. The fate of the Mass interested her particularly, because most of it had been written while I was staying with her at Cap Martin; and being wholly unmusical herself—a great asset in a musical patron—she readily accepted the composer's estimate of its worth! I do not think that she was less delighted than I myself when, in the autumn of 1891, Mr. Barnby (later Sir Joseph), Director of the Royal Choral Society, provisionally accepted the Mass for production at the Albert Hall. By 'provisionally' I mean that I could not get him to fix a date, but the general idea was that the performance would be in the second half of the ensuing season, that is about March, 1892.

Mr. Barnby's reluctance to name the day rather troubled me, and the Empress thought it would help matters if she commissioned me to inform him that she herself might possibly be present—a wonderful concession to friendship, for since 1870 she had refused to appear officially in any public place.

This proposal of hers, which I should never have dared to suggest, showed how thoroughly she had grasped the musical situation in England, where, even before the war denuded the country of concert-going Germans, good music does not pay. That being so, composers who have money fight their way with it, and those who have not try to get up a little boom—which comes to the same thing. If you cannot afford to distribute dozens of tickets among friends and supporters, the public must be induced to buy ; and Sir Thomas Beecham once said that the safest plan would be to introduce an elephant that can stand on its trunk, or some such spot of relief, into every concert programme.

In this spirit, then, did the Empress tackle my problem. Further, learning that the Duke of Edinburgh was President of the Royal Choral Society, she thought there could be no harm in manifesting her sympathy for me under the eyes of the Royal Family. An excellent opportunity of doing so lay to hand ; it had been for many years the Queen's habit to put one of her Scotch houses at the Empress's disposal during the autumn months, and thus it came to pass that in October I was invited to join her at Birkhall.

Birkhall was a laird's house, not big, but comfortable, about eight miles from Balmoral and in the midst of most beautiful scenery. My first amazed impression had nothing to do with the landscape, however, but with the Empress herself. O horror ! She, who loathed caps and never wore them, now appeared at the front door with a little erection of black lace on her small, beautifully-poised head ! What did this portend ?

It portended that the Queen did not approve of capless old ladies, and this compromise was the result. I was indignant at such pusillanimity, but she only

laughed and said what on earth did it signify? 'Si cela fait plaisir à votre Reine!'

The day after my arrival the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and Prince Henry of Battenberg came over to see her, and as the Duchess and the Prince were both fond of music, I was asked to sing. Following on that, the Queen sent a message to say that when she came to pay her own visit next day I was to be presented.

Mary Crawshay, whose jokes I am never weary of repeating, once said to an old lady from South Africa who had remarked that you mustn't play games with the English climate: 'No; or, at least, only *indoor* games!' But the Queen's life was one long outdoor game with the Scotch climate—a still more uncertain playfellow, and next day a storm was raging that, whatever one may say about the fleeting character of Scotch storms, began at breakfast and lasted till nightfall. I could never have believed that any old lady would venture out in such weather, but I was informed, and it proved to be true, that the Queen would infallibly turn up, and probably in an open carriage; also that her ladies would wear the minimum of wraps, as the Queen herself never caught cold and had a great objection to being crowded out by rugs and furs.

Some of her ladies were old and frail, but the rigours of a Scotch 'waiting,' including a north-east wind *with rain*, were evidently nullified by the glow of loyalty within their bosoms. On the other hand, dread of displeasing 'the dear Queen,' as she was always called (and rightly—for, if dreaded, she was greatly beloved), may have had something to do with it. Terror often acts as a tonic, and the first rule in the Primer for Courtiers—a fine rule that fashions heroes and heroines—is: 'Never, never be ill.' Anyhow none of her ladies seems to have died of pneumonia, as might have

been expected, after these terrific drives that sometimes lasted hours and hours.

The Queen was expected at three o'clock, but long before that time the Empress was scouting in passages and peering into the storm-tossed garden to make sure that the coast was clear, for the Queen had the greatest horror of coming across stray people. Indeed I know of a case where an unlucky Maid of Honour, surprised in the corridor of Windsor Castle by the unexpected appearance of Her Majesty in the far distance, remained concealed and trembling behind a curtain for half an hour, while the Empress of India was supervising the placing of tributes from an Indian Prince. And when, on the stroke of three, the Royal carriage arrived at Birkhall, but for the Empress, Madame Arcos, and the footmen it might have been a deserted house.

The Empress and Madame Arcos received the Queen and Princess Christian at the front door, and the red carpet, unrolled in a flash, was sopping wet before the august visitors had time to set foot on it. The three Royal Ladies then disappeared into the drawing-room, while Madame Arcos and Lady Ampthill, who was in waiting on the Queen, came into the room where I in another sense was also in waiting. Presently the Empress herself looked in, beckoned to me, I followed . . . and lo ! I was in the Presence.

Seated on one of the ordinary cane-chairs, no doubt because easier to get up from, was a wee little old lady with exactly the face of the photographs, though paler than one expected, on her head a close white straw hat, tied under her chin with a black ribbon (the only possible plan, given the storm and an open barouche). It is a well-known fact that in spite of a physique that did not lend itself to effects of majesty the personality of the Queen was dignified and imposing to the last

degree. So awe-inspiring was the first impression that I should have been terrified but for the wonderful, blue, child-like eyes, and the sweetest, most entrancing smile I have ever seen on human face.

The Empress had told me that though the Queen had chronic sciatica and walked with a stick she never permitted anyone to help her out of her chair, even when that chair had no arms. Much to my astonishment she now got up to shake hands with me, lifting herself with a sort of one, two, three, and away movement, which it took all one's strength of character not to assist with a hand under her elbow.

I cannot remember what passed at that interview except that she was markedly kind, and that Princess Christian, who, as I was to find out later, always knew what the helpful thing to say was and said it, at once remarked that she had heard a great deal about me from the Bishop of Rochester and his wife, the point being that the Bishop (who is now Archbishop of Canterbury) had been Dean of Windsor, and besides being the Queen's Private Chaplain was one of her most valued friends and advisers. A further passport to favour was the fact that I could claim to be connected with him, his brother having married my eldest sister.

It was not the Queen's way, and not according to the tradition she had been brought up in, to put you at your ease, as some Sovereigns do and bring about anything distantly approaching conversation. But the Empress, who was the most socially competent of beings, talked away cheerfully in her own easy, delightful fashion, all in adopting a manner I had hitherto seen no trace of and which was reserved exclusively for the Queen—something of the manner of an unembarrassed but attentive child talking to its grandmother.

Presently I was asked to sing, and sang several

German songs which seemed to please my audience so highly that the Empress was emboldened to say : 'You ought to hear her sing her Mass !' Whereupon I performed the *Benedictus* and the *Sanctus* after the manner of composers, which means singing the chorus as well as the solo parts, and trumpeting forth orchestral effects as best you can—a noisy proceeding in a small room. I had warned the Empress that if I did it at all it would be done in that fashion, and being a most courageous woman she took the responsibility—with no dire results, as subsequent events were to prove. Indeed, she remarked afterwards that beyond doubt the Queen was delighted with this novel experience, not merely being polite.

The Queen then expressed a hope that the Empress would bring me to Balmoral, after which I was dismissed and joined the official ladies in the other room. There we had tea, and I listened for the first time, in high edification, to the delicate and guarded style of intercourse that appears to be the right thing between such interlocutors. The storm, which had somewhat abated in honour of the Queen's arrival, was now raging more wildly than ever, the rain descending like one continuous waterfall. It was hardly possible to hear oneself speak, but I managed to ask Lady Ampthill if the Queen would have the carriage shut going home, and to catch her serene reply : 'O dear no, I think not.' Watching their departure from behind a curtain a little later on, I saw that this incredible prediction was fulfilled, and my ideas on the subject of what 'Queen's weather' really amounts to were modified for evermore.

The Empress told us, after she was gone, that from first to last the Queen made not the slightest comment on the tempest, nor any move to depart till a gilly came banging at the drawing-room door, and

said : 'Your Majesty must go—the horses can't stand this'—the sort of thing not one of her children would have dared to say, unless, perhaps, the Empress Frederick. She also told us that after I had left the room the Queen remarked : 'I hear she is going to turn Roman Catholic,' to which she had replied :

'I don't think that is at all likely.'

Here I broke in, being at that time much preoccupied with religious questions, and exclaimed that she might surely have added : 'On the contrary, she is an enthusiastic Anglican.' But the Empress said the Queen did not go into these matters as closely as all that, and, knowing in what high favour the Bishop of Rochester stood, she had told her my opinions 'étaient identiques avec les siennes'! After which I wrote to Edith Davidson that I trusted the Bishop would from henceforth hold himself responsible for my views, no matter on what subject.

In due time came the promised command, and one evening I found myself struggling to achieve as presentable a toilette as possible, having been bidden, with the Empress, to dine at Balmoral. At the last moment she herself put a few finishing touches, producing and arranging upon my head a grand jet serpent and disposing other jetty splendours about my person, for the Court was, as usual, in mourning.

I, of course, dined with the Household—such an everyday affair to hundreds of people that they would hardly deem it worth talking about. But to me it was a new, interesting, and rather alarming experience; nor has custom staled the impression, for it remained solitary of its kind.

To begin with, the dinner service impressed me. My own dog, Marco, ate off a tin platter, and often, when cutting away gristle or severing bones for him, I had shuddered at the contact of steel and metal. But

the first time your own knife and fork are privileged to scratch about on gold and silver plate, unpleasant as it is you are impressed. I was impressed, too, by the air of distinguished boredom, combined with a well-bred but unmistakable consciousness of occupying an enviable position, that, as I was to find out in after years, people about a Court invariably distil. And, again, as at Birkhall, the Agag-like gait of the conversation was extremely impressive. I cannot claim to be constitutionally shy, which may be a sign of conceit, and may, on the other hand, indicate that the drama itself, and not your own part in it, absorbs most of your attention ; but surely, I said to myself, the genius of this place must affect even the most brazen ! With what invisible pitfalls is one surrounded, how terrible must be the penalties incurred by one false step, since all are keyed up, as a matter of habit, to this extraordinarily high pitch ! No ups and downs of mood here, no enthusiasm, no individual opinions, and for Heaven's sake no originality ! If the writing on the wall were to reveal itself (for there is writing on every wall could one but detect it) you would read these words : ' Corners rounded off here while you Wait.'

Arthur Ponsonby, who had formerly been a Queen's Page, once told me that when studying modern languages for the Foreign Office he came home from Germany one Christmas to find himself invited to dine with the Household. And when dinner was over he only stopped himself just in time from flapping his table-napkin free from crumbs and folding it up, as was the custom in the North German professorial family he had been living with for months. It was a narrow escape, and no wonder his heart nearly stopped beating.

All the same, dinner was very pleasant. I had met one or two of the Equerries and Maids of Honour at

the Deanery, and as Tosti, the song-writer, whom I liked extremely, sat on one side of me, I was quite sorry when the doors were flung open by scarlet-liveried footmen, signal that the Queen was ready for our presence.

. . . . . .

I must now nerve myself to recount the story of one of the most appalling blunders I ever committed in my life ; even to-day, though I can laugh about it, the thought of it gives me a slight sinking ! At the moment, though conscious of having sinned against ritual, I did not realise the full enormity of my crime—you must have been bred to Courts to do that. And though, as time went on, I grasped it exhaustively, somehow or other I shrank from cross-questioning the Empress on the subject. For one thing, so great was her kindness that she would have attenuated my *faux pas* ; for another, knowing what her agony must have been as she watched her young friend's proceedings, I fancied she would prefer not to live through it all again ! Finally, truth to tell, the whole thing was a humiliation to me to think of ! Despicable, no doubt, to take it as hard as all that, but so it was.

Why no one prepared me for the situation I was about to become part of, why no one gave me a hint how to comport myself in it, I cannot imagine. The Empress was always thinking out and guarding against eventualities in what seemed to me an almost feverish fashion, yet this time she said not a word, and I can only suppose she felt certain that my darkness would be enlightened by Madame Arcos or one of the Maids of Honour. But it was not, and when we left the dinner-table, being the only guest of my sex present, I gaily headed the procession drawing-roomwards, my mind innocently set on making myself agreeable when I should get there.

It was a large room with deep bay-windows, and the first thing I noticed was that the sofas and chairs were tightly upholstered in the gay Stuart tartan—a proof that to be Queen of Scotland involves painful æsthetic concessions.

On a large hearthrug—tartan, too, I think—in front of the grate, in which I rather fancy a few logs burned (though given Her Majesty's hardy habits it seems improbable), stood the Queen, conversing with the Empress in a lively manner that contrasted with the somewhat halting intercourse at Birkhall. Evidently, I said to myself, the animating effects of a good dinner may be counted on even at the less frivolous European Courts.

Leading up to the two august ladies was an avenue composed of Royal personages—ranged, as I afterwards found out, in order of precedence, the highest in rank being closest to the hearthrug—which avenue, broadening towards its base, gradually became mere ladies and gentlemen of the Court, and finally petered out in a group of Maids of Honour huddled ingloriously in the bay-window.

What I ought to have done, I believe, was to stand rigid and silent among these last, try discreetly to catch the eye of the Queen and the Princesses, curtsey profoundly when successful, and await events. Will it be believed that what I did do was to advance unconcernedly up the avenue, with a polite intention to say 'How do you do' to the Queen?

If a young dog strays up the aisle during church no one says anything, no one does anything, but, none the less, he soon becomes aware that something is wrong. Even so, as the distance between myself and the hearthrug diminished, did I become aware that something was very wrong indeed; my cheerful confidence waned and my step faltered. I saw the Queen slightly turn

her head, look at me for a second as if I were some strange insect, and resume her conversation with the Empress. If I had been a Brobdingnagian spider as big as a Newfoundland she would not have acted differently. Someone would remove the creature ; that was enough. I did not catch the Empress's eye, but I now know that since she could not shriek : 'Mon Dieu, n'avancez pas !' she must have wished the earth would open and swallow her up. At this moment dear, human Princess Christian, who had come more in contact with low life than the Queen, stepped forward and shook hands with me—and somehow or other, I know not how, I backed away into the obscurity from which I should never have emerged.

Afterwards I heard all about that Hearthrug, and could gauge the dimensions of my audacity. It was as sacred a carpet as exists outside Mohammedanism, and the distance from it at which people were permitted to station themselves—if invited to come near it at all—was the measure of their rank and importance. Only Crowned Heads trod it as a right, or occasionally, as supreme honour, some very favourite Minister, like Lord Beaconsfield. If such as I had set foot upon it, as, but for the blessed intervention of Princess Christian, I might have done . . . but, no ! A miracle would have been wrought, a thunderbolt would have fallen upon a tartan sofa and created a diversion, something—anything would have happened rather than such sacrilege could have been permitted !

When the legitimate moment came for my presence being recognised by the Queen I cannot recall how it was accomplished, whether she went the round of the company, or whether I was summoned to her chair. But whichever it was, my scandalous entry was evidently

condoned, for nothing could be more gracious than her manner. And presently, having received the command to 'let us hear some more of your Mass,' I was seated at a huge, yawning grand piano, with the Queen and the Empress right and left, in closest proximity. I ventured to ask whether the music was to be rendered as at Birkhall—a proceeding which seemed unthinkable in these surroundings—but I was assured that exactly that rendering was 'so very interesting,' and would be welcome.

I looked round the frozen ranks of impending listeners, each one of them exhaling decorum and self-restraint unutterable. A vault beneath a church would have been a more kindling *mise en scène* for an inspirational effort on a large scale. Not because of the Royalties, who one and all showed genuine and kindly interest, but because of their inevitable adjunct, 'the Court'! Straight in the line of vision, glued against a distant wall, stood Lord Cross, the Minister in Attendance, looking startlingly like his caricature in *Punch*, 'Very Cross.' I afterwards learned that I had not a more appreciative listener in the room, but how could one guess that? . . . Well, there was nothing for it but to dismiss this Madame Tussaud-like company from my mind and concentrate upon the Mass.

Strange to relate, once I got under way there was something inspiring in the very incongruity of the whole thing, the desperateness of such a venture! Never did I get through one of these performances better or enjoy doing it more. I cannot remember what numbers I chose, but the *Sanctus* must have been one of them, for in it is a D trumpet which I remember rang out astonishingly in that superbly acoustic drawing-room. I dared not let my eyes wander in the direction of the listeners while the high D was being held, lest what I might see should wreck everything. But I need not have been afraid, as I was to learn presently.

And now, emboldened by the sonority of the place, I did the *Gloria*—the most tempestuous and, I thought, the best number of all. At a certain drum effect a foot, even, came into play, and I fancy that as regards volume of sound at least, the presence of a real chorus and orchestra was scarcely missed! This time, fortified by the simplicity and genuineness of the Sovereign's appreciation, I thought I would risk a glance at the faces of her terrifying Court. What matter if astonishment and secret scandalisation be there depicted? I was well down in the saddle now, not easily to be thrown!

I glanced. They were stupendous. No surprise, no emotion of any kind! a spectacle so exciting, because so fantastic, that the result was a finale to that *Gloria* such as I had never before succeeded in wresting out!

Once more the Queen seemed really delighted—whether for the Empress's sake or because she liked it, who shall say? Anyhow, the Hereditary Grand Duke of Hesse who was a cultivated musician seemed really to understand what he had been listening to, and so did Princess Christian, who was constantly in touch with serious music and musicians. And I could see that the beloved Empress, in spite of the incident in the Royal Avenue, did not repent her of the *rôle* she had undertaken—according to her (for I have said she accepted the composer's view of the Mass) the *rôle* of a foreigner who introduces a gifted Englishwoman to the Queen of England!

Then Tosti, accompanying himself, sang some favourite songs of his own composition with exquisite blending of voice, phrasing, and accompaniment. It was small art, but real art. Most of the people to whom I expressed an ecstasy that even the prevailing discretion could not damp, replied instantaneously, as if uttering one of the responses in church: 'Yes, but

what a pity his voice is so small!' And I perceived that this was the accepted formula for Tosti.

When the Queen said 'Good night' to me she added a hope 'that we shall see you at Windsor,' and then she and her Imperial guest moved towards a special Royal exit; for though the Empress, the Marquis of Bassano (who was in attendance on her), Madame Arcos, and I were all driving home in the same carriage, it would never do for us three to go out by the same door as a Crowned Head.

This was lucky, for I now had the chance of witnessing a wonderful bit of ritual. Arrived on the threshold, the while we mortals stood rigid, the Queen motioned the Empress to pass before her; this the Empress gracefully declined to do. They then curtsied low to each other. The movement of the Queen, crippled though she was, was amazingly easy and dignified; but the Empress, who was then sixty-seven, made such an exquisite sweep down to the floor and up again, all in one gesture, that I can only liken it to a flower bent and released by the wind. They then passed *together* out of the door, practically shoulder to shoulder; but I believe, though far be it from my ignorance to dogmatise, that on such occasions the visiting Sovereign is permitted to permit the home Sovereign to lag about one inch behind.

Thinking of that superb reverence of the Empress's which I am everlastingly glad to have seen, I have reflected that every bone in her body must have been placed true in its socket to the millionth part of an inch; that her proportions must have been perfect, the fibre of her muscles, the texture of her skin of the most superb quality, and that this is probably what the word 'beauty' means. Otherwise, so unbroken, so undulating was the motion, that one could only explain it by what an old Irish servant remarked to a conspicuously

active friend of mine, temporarily crippled with sciatica : 'To think of *you* like this, you that goes flourishing about as if you hadn't a bone in your body !'

I may add that the Empress was not required to drain the cup of humiliation to the dregs that night, inasmuch as the black jet serpent did not come down in coils over my face during the *Gloria* as might have been expected, but not till we were safe in the carriage and half-way home.

. . . . . .

To complete the story of the Mass, I must first say that the Empress's kindness in bringing about that Balmoral performance was of the greatest possible use. A year later (Christmas, 1892) it was still as far off materialising on a Royal Choral Society programme as ever. But by that time my lifelong friendship with Lady Ponsonby, wife of Sir Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's Private Secretary, had just begun, and one day, at her instigation, Sir Henry told the Duke of Edinburgh, whom I did not know, how matters stood.

The Duke had heard all about the Mass, thanks to the Empress, and the result was that it was at once put down for performance. And not only did the Empress definitely undertake to be present, but Princess Christian and Princess Henry of Battenberg, who was ill when I had been in Scotland, did the same. And whereas singers with reputations are not anxious, as a rule, to take part in novelties by practically unknown composers—not, at least, unless they are heavily subsidised by the composer to do so—it now became emphatically worth while to sing in the Mass. Thus I was able to command the services of admirable soloists.

The production, which took place in March, 1893, was splendid, the public enthusiastic, the Press the same . . . but the Mass was never performed again.

This is not surprising, for a huge and complicated

choral work is not a convenient item in a concert season, even though it be one of the great classical Masses that are certain draws. If I had chosen an Old Testament subject—say Methuselah, or perhaps Joash King of Judah, contemporary of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz King of Israel (2 Kings xiii. 10) one of the Three Choirs Festivals might have jumped at it. But, strange to say, the everlasting beauty of the Mass appealed to me more strongly, and I have but reaped the reward of my perversity.

Still, it is a pity, for, judging by the pianoforte score, which Messrs. Novello rashly published, and which I have dragged forth and examined in honour of these pages of reminiscence, I see that, be the worth of my music what it may, I shall never do anything better! But if, even after one's own death, anyone thinks it worth producing, it will not have been written in vain.

. . . . . .

There is one thing more I should like to say for the comfort of a certain breed of young composers, those who only see where they have failed. It is a difficult experience to recount, yet it ought to be possible to put it decently, to convey exactly what I wish to convey —no more and no less.

The point I want to bring out and should like to insist on beforehand, is that such composers, besides writhing under a sense of their own ineptitude, will at all times be prone to over-estimate and listen with too indulgent an ear to the efforts of others. But at that moment of special anguish when a public performance of their own work is queering the pitch, one may safely say that the nerves of these unfortunates will be too unhinged to register an approximately true judgment as to any item on the programme! It is only thus that I can explain an incident from which, nevertheless, I confess

to have drawn consolation more than once in hours of gloom.

I have not examined the score of that Mass, which is where I cannot get at it easily, for fifteen years, and I am sure I should now consider it badly orchestrated. Yet I am also sure that for all its faults of inexperience it would not sound ugly on the whole. A painter may paint a picture which is not hideous in colour *as a whole*, but he knows what he meant to do with this bit of sky, with that bit of foreground; and to him it appears irredeemably bad as to colour.

So I, with my Mass, was in despair at the first orchestral rehearsal. It sounded horrible, all wrong, and when I went away I asked myself how Barnby could have accepted such a vile score.

Next day, at the second rehearsal, my work was to come on at 11.30 a.m., and shortly after eleven, as I was climbing the interminable stairs and twisting about in the intricate corridors that lead to the Great Hall, sounds of music came floating towards me from afar. In sick misery I said to myself: '*That's* how I should like my music to sound!'

When I got nearer I seemed to know that phrase. What was it? . . . *It was my own Mass.*

DRISHANE. *October* 1920.

'MOUNT MUSIC'[1]

FORTUNATELY for our mental health, subjects such as the Income Tax, Justice as Administered, Arithmetic in the Telephone Office, the Origin of Evil, and kindred problems, are not always in the forefront of our minds. Nevertheless at odd times we *have* thought about Ireland—have heard and read about Ireland. And the harder we have tried to understand how things have come to this pass, the greater our bewilderment.

The latest attempt at a Home Rule Bill is now on us, the country is under martial law, and it is difficult to think of anything else. This, I imagine, is why I have been asked to write about a work that, more than any I know, gives one the sensation of a veil having been lifted. No meretricious lighting of the scene thus revealed—no hardening or softening of contours. 'This is Ireland as she really is,' one says to oneself.

There is one inevitable difficulty connected with the reviewing of a new book by E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, namely, that two other works of theirs, 'The R.M.' and 'The Real Charlotte,' spring up in one's mind and range themselves on either side of the newcomer. This being so it is as well to accept the challenge at once, and say that if less brimming with youthful lightheartedness, and, consequently, less amusing than the first, and if, on the other hand, more normal as to the subject matter, and, therefore, less

[1] *Mount Music*, by E. Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross. (Longmans.)

startling and terrific than the second, *Mount Music* is something the others are not. Of the same kinship, in that it is original, entertaining from start to finish, intersected with thrilling hunts, full of fun and admirable character-drawing, fashioned with the old fastidious workmanship, nevertheless a new spirit has brooded over this latest book of theirs. Not new really, for it is in all their work. But this time it has taken charge, and may, perhaps, be defined as a spirit of white integrity, clothed in tenderness, wisdom, and humour, but above all in tenderness. This is the record of eyes incapable of either blurred or biassed vision; the sympathy is often veiled in fun, sometimes even in irony, but a kind heart that will not be denied has the last word. Yet never at the expense of truth; and as the story moves along—in the earliest few chapters perhaps at too leisurely a pace—the mind is gradually possessed by the conviction that things are, indeed, as here portrayed, that this is the truth. And for this reason we believe that *Mount Music*, mere novel though it be, will one day find itself taking rank, all unawares, as an historical document.

It is difficult to explain what exactly is implied by 'white integrity,' though easy to say what it excludes. There are no high lights here, no underlinings, no pilings-on of the agony. If, as you read, the heart is alternately rent and soothed, it is because the hand of a great artist has touched the very spring of truth; not with a view to getting an effect, but much as life itself lays a finger on the deep, hidden nerve of joy, or of passion, or of pain. To give a concrete example of this sort of integrity—the vulgar people in the book are undeniably vulgar, but they are also lovable. We see them as they saw each other, not merely as they appear to the fastidious and better-bred critic. Mrs. Mangan, 'as kindly, lazy, and handsome a creature as

ever lived down spiteful gossip by good nature'; her husband, the Big Doctor, one of the great figures and great successes of the story, who, in spite of all—and there was a good deal—considers himself 'not too bad a fellow altogether'; these, and even less promising candidates for our sympathy, manage somehow or other to capture it, or at least to escape ruthless condemnation. It is an amusing symptom, by the by, of the authors' own indifference to ill-natured suggestion, that though, as we see, Mrs. Mangan is primarily introduced on a wave of 'spiteful gossip,' not till some pages later do they condescend to inform us that this gossip was, as a matter of fact, without justification!

Again, though the point of the book (if it be not unfair to drag ethics into a work of art) is to exhibit the workings of what the authors call 'the Spirit of the Nation'—in other words, the religious dissension characteristic of the Island of Saints—neither the Romish priests nor the Protestant clergy can complain of being pilloried in the interests of the other. On the whole, given the sportsmanlike instincts of these writers, one might gather, even if one did not know it to be the case, that they are members of the Church of Ireland. For much as we may regret the use to which these qualities are put, the priests at least show some degree of initiative and intelligence, whereas the others . . . but let us draw a veil over the ineptitudes of the Protestant shepherds!

Perhaps the greatest triumph of the book is the love-story of Christian—one of those rare spirits that kindly Nature will sometimes enshrine in a shape as utterly human as it is adorable—and Larry, a young gentleman of artistic proclivities who, one can but admit, is on a lower plane. For which reason for a brief moment a fear besets us lest it should be another case of Dorothea and the sadly inadequate Will

Ladislaw. But Mrs. Twomey—an ancient retainer, drawn with the unfailing skill of these artists in the portraiture of the Irish peasant—shrewd little Mrs. Twomey, in whose judgment we have complete confidence, has described Larry quite early in the story as 'a little fella that is in tune with all the world.' And when, almost as last word in the book, she further remarks that Christian 'was fond of him always,' and adds: 'And why wouldn't she be fond of him? Sure the dog'd be fond of him!' (a high encomium from one who, as we are told, 'thought badly of dogs') readers will find that they have long since come to some such conclusion themselves. It is useless in this case to weigh respective moral specific gravities; Christian loved him, and, given the depth, the tenderness, the mysterious intuition, the matchless altitude of her soul, Larry will have been drawn up to her level, or somewhere near it. For there are people to love whom is a sanctification; and Christian, proud, high-spirited, immutably faithful, is one of these.

Even as the traveller demands of Baedeker the asterisk that shall save him from forlorn wanderings under a starless heaven, so readers look to a reviewer for samples of an author's skill. Happy phrases may be lit on anywhere in *Mount Music*: 'the laugh that is the flower of the root of scorn,' 'the large and sliding brightness of the river'; the old cook's description of Christian, 'I wouldn't doubt that child to be wanting the world in her pocket before it was made'; Mrs. Twomey's characterisation of a young dispensary doctor mysteriously lifted to power: 'a low, hungry little fella that'd thravel the counthry for the sake of a ha'penny' (observe the Irish peasant's contempt for poverty); or the authors' remark concerning the stricken Christian, bereft, shipwrecked in a desolate, storm-shaken house, yet unafraid of possible ghostly visitants: 'What

spectre from the other world has power to break a heart?' One might also star a very perfect differentiation which occurs where Dr. Mangan treads heavily on the cat, 'who, her mystic meditations thus painfully interrupted, vanished in darkness, uttering the baleful cry of her kind, that is so inherently opposed to the blended forgiveness and apology that give poignancy to a dog's reproach for a similar injury.' Or, again, as sidelight on political feeling in Ireland, it is instructive to learn that 'Wolfe Tone or Robert Emmet could hardly have abhorred the Government of England more heartily than did these three respectable, law-abiding, unalterably-Unionist ladies.'

Mount Music is not an easy book to quote from, any more than it would be easy to 'quote' bits of a sunrise, an incoming tide, or anything else that gradually floods the soul.

But here is a scene that falls in a time of great sorrow for Christian. On her way to visit a woman who has recently lost her husband, she stops to speak to a labouring man, who says to her: 'Your father knows me well. I remember of one time when the hounds was crossing my land, and I seen yourself and your sisther taking the hur'ls. I cries out to ye "me heart'd rise at ye, me darlins!" and the Major he laughs.' . . . Presently Christian perceives a girl seated on a heap of rushes; she is very pale, with a 'fixity of sadness about her,' and does not appear to notice when Christian speaks to her.

'She's my daughter,' said Peter Callaghan, in his quiet voice. 'She wouldn't know it was to her you spoke. She's dark, the creature. Blinded she is. She's not long that way.'

'How did it happen?' said Christian, in a low voice.

'You could not say,' said Peter Callaghan; his

dreamy eyes roved again over the broad river; 'God left a hand on her,' he said.

Christian went on her way, and the words stayed with her. 'God left a hand on her.' There had been no resentment in the father's voice, only a profound and noble gravity. 'And here am I,' thought Christian, 'angry and whimpering——'

She then goes on her way to the house of the widow:

'In the kitchen a red-haired woman was seated, rocking a wooden cradle with her foot, while she stitched at a child's frock. Hens, with their alert and affected reserve of manner, stepped in and out of the doorway, sometimes slowly, with poised claw, sometimes headlong, with greedy speed. Christian watched them and the hound puppies (in whose power of resistance to temptation she had no confidence) while she talked to the woman of the house, and heard the story of her trouble.

Her husband had been 'above in the hospital at Riverstown. He was in it with a fortnight,' said the red-haired woman in the idiom of her district, the noise of the rocker of the cradle on the earthen floor beating through her words; 'he had a bunch, like, undher his chin, and they were to cut it.' She paused, and the wooden bump of the cradle filled the pause. 'When they had it cut, he rose up on the table, and all his blood went from him; only one little tint, I suppose, stopped in him. Afther a while, the nurse seen the life creeping back in him. "We have him yet," says she to the Docthor. "I thought he was gone from us," says the Docthor.' The voice ceased again. The speaker slashed the frock in her hand at an over-bold hen, which had skipped on to the table beside her and was pecking hard and sharp at some food on a plate.

'They sent him home then. We thought he was

cured entirely. He pulled out the summer, but he had that langersome way with him through all.' She was silent a moment, then she looked at Christian, with grief, crowned and omnipotent, on her tragic brow.

'As long as he was alive, I had courage in spite of all; but when I thinks now of them days, and the courage I had, it goes through me!' Her red-brown eyes stared through the open door at the path twisting across the field to the high road.

'Ye'll never see him on that road again, and when I looks up it me heart gets dark. Sure, now when he's gone, I thinks often if he'd be lyin' par'lysed above in the bed, I'd be runnin' about happy!'

When Christian went home Mrs. Barry walked with her to the little green bridge, and stood there until her visitor reached the bend of the river where the path passed from her sight.

At the turning Christian looked back and saw the lonely figure standing at the bridge-head, and again she said to herself: 'Here am I, angry and whimpering.'

Perhaps this one scene, simple, poignant, unforgettable—and there are many such in *Mount Music*—may suffice to account for and justify the present writer's opinion; that, with the exception of 'Irish Memories,' which stands in a place of its own, this almost piercingly human book is the most beautiful the authors have given us.

TAORMINA. *April* 1920.

AN ADVENTURE IN A TRAIN

It seems to me that anything which purports to be a record of an event that really happened is spoiled by the very slightest admixture of fiction. I believe, too, that if a chronicler have but strength of mind to resist all temptations to improve on his text, integrity will be its own reward. In some occult manner the reader will know he is not being made a fool of.

The following adventure has not been worked up into literature ; everything took place exactly as will be related. I may add that I am incapable, unfortunately, of retaining with accuracy a single turn in the talk of persons not of my own class—whether the dialect of country folk or the latest jargon of the Smart. English as spoken in Shoreditch, the region in which my heroine apparently resided—or, as she put it, 'resigned'—is a language wholly unknown to me ; nor have I a notion whether the expressions she used were, or were not, peculiar to herself.

All I know is that circumstances enabled me to take down, then and there, each golden word that fell from her lips without my indiscretion giving offence ; that for weeks afterwards my notebook, still a cherished possession, lived in my pocket ; and that its contents were inflicted on everyone I met.

No ; not everyone. Alas ! our generation does not practise what a French writer has called 'la noble franchise' of the sixteenth century ; and for that reason

at certain points of the dialogue as given here I have had to fall back upon dots and paraphrase. Otherwise not a word has been altered; and if hyper-delicate readers are shocked at a certain revelling in ailments which is characteristic of the uneducated all the world over, I may perhaps remind them that better-bred people have been known to indulge the same weakness. But . . . in these it never makes one laugh.

. . . . . .

One day, in the year 1902, I got into a third-class carriage at Waterloo, my destination being Woking, two stations beyond which is Aldershot.

The only other occupant of the carriage was an elderly lady, dressed in some black material that looked as if it had originally intended to be satin, but had changed its mind later on. From beneath a close-fitting black bonnet emerged, on either side, two little sausage-rolls of grey hair, and her expression was a mixture of severity, superiority, and self-assurance. I noticed that she had installed herself, with her face to the engine, in the exact centre of the empty row of seats opposite me—rather an original and alarming proceeding, I thought. She carried a small patent-leather bag which looked as if it might contain tracts, and it occurred to me that possibly her line was philanthropy.

Presently one became aware that a touching scene was being enacted on the platform just outside our carriage. A pale, grey-bearded man of the respectable mechanic type, aged about sixty, clad in a seedy grey suit, was submitting without enthusiasm to the fervent hugs and resounding kisses of a middle-aged woman, whose appearance, without amounting to disreputability, suggested that once upon a time she might have been 'gay.' The brown, frizzy front bursting forth from beneath her beflowered head-gear, and the short bugle-

fringed cape with crewel-work pinned in festoons round its neck, carried off and bade defiance to a shabby skirt and a remarkably easy pair of boots.

The general effect was a severe struggle for life, combined with determination to keep up appearances. One caught many an exhortation to 'keep his heart up' and 'look after himself,' addressed to the grey-bearded man, the extreme melancholy of whose visage, and the mechanical 'Ay-ay' with which he punctuated these exhortations, made me think he must surely be a Scotsman.

Eventually, not without a stumble or two, and with many apologies for treading on my feet, the lady hoisted herself into the carriage and sat down—partly beside me, partly upon me—all the time firing off volley after volley of affectionate counsel in the direction of the door. They were obviously man and wife. The husband did not strike me as unfriendly; it was merely that she was so effusive, he so depressed. And as I made myself small in my corner it was impossible to avoid noticing that the new-comer had fortified herself against the pangs of parting by a recent visit to the refreshment-room.

Finally, but not before we were well under way, she subsided into her seat, and instantly succumbed to drowsiness.

In those days trains ran into Waterloo on single lines, and there was a platform on either side of us. Just as we were clearing the station the door on the wrong side of the carriage opened, and with cat-like deftness a young man slipped in and gently closed the door behind him—a tall young man in a bowler hat and red woollen comforter, whose manner of lowering himself into a seat and at once averting his eyes was curiously discreet and self-effacing.

By this time my neighbour, unconscious of the disapproval with which her *vis-à-vis*, the philanthropic lady, was eyeing her, had fallen asleep, her head reposing on my shoulder, and I was just thinking of taking steps when the next incident happened.

As the train slowed down going through Vauxhall, once more the wrong door opened, and in stepped two men. There was a slight scuffle, and in less time than it takes to relate, handcuffs were snapped on to the young man's wrists. After which his captors sat down, one opposite him, one between him and the philanthropic lady—the whole thing having taken place in complete silence.

The banging of the door had roused my neighbour, who was now sitting up, paralysed, as were we all, with astonishment. But not for long.

Lurching heavily against me, she suddenly said, in a hoarse whisper: 'Did you see that?'

I nodded.

'Ain't you afraid?' she asked, with wide, staring eyes.

We were five to one, and the philanthropic lady would certainly give a good account of herself. It was not, therefore, in a spirit of *braggadocio* that I smiled and shook my head.

'Lor', what a nerve!' she exclaimed, in high admiration. '*You're* a courag*i*ous one!' Then, pointing dramatically in the direction of the prisoner: 'What's that in 'is 'and?' she demanded. Her blood-curdling voice would have frightened a child into fits, but it was easy to see that she was not in the least alarmed. It was merely a concession to drama.

I transferred my gaze from her large and fascinating countenance to the young man's hand, and gave it as my opinion that the object in question was a pipe.

'*Pipe* indeed!' said she, pitying my simplicity,

"Why, they 'as 'em arranged as revolvers and runs up and down this line as bold as brass, disguised in policeman's trousers! I've often made the mistake myself!'

I now perceived that I was in for a remarkable interview; and, reflecting that my friend's condition was one in which people are not very observant, also that she seemed disposed to fall asleep on the slightest provocation, I took out a notebook I had just bought in town. After having jotted down all her remarks up to that point, I gently nudged her into wakefulness and asked if she thought the young man was a thief?

She at once assumed the manner of one who knows more than she is at liberty to communicate. And I may say here that I never met an individual who commanded a greater variety of moods, or whose facility in passing from one to the other was more bewildering.

'I'm not going to say anything,' she remarked, with studied deliberation. '*You* don't know as much as *I* do. But if the men had asked *me* it would have been very awkward, for I live near the place he resigns. Ah,' she added, sighing heavily, 'it's very cruel and very hard to accuse . . . *but* . . .' (with emphasis) '*that man got in here to rob!*'

The philanthropic lady had been sitting bolt upright, withdrawing herself in a marked manner from our proceedings; but at this point aloofness yielded to curiosity.

'You know him, madam?' she asked, bending forward.

'I do, madam,' replied the other with unction—'and the woman who co-habits with him, and often I hear 'em murdering each other o' nights. A place called The Warring it is—'alf a yard . . . well,' (with a little laugh) 'I won't exaggerate, 'alf a *mile* from where I live.'

Here a colloquy took place between the philanthropic lady and the plain-clothes man who sat next her. I could not catch what passed, but as she took out her purse, and made some proposition which he met with the superior smile policemen reserve for a sentimental public, I gathered that the young man was in the habit of travelling without a ticket and that an offer to pay his fare had been rejected.

All this time the benevolent intervener had, of course, been holding the attention of the house—a state of things that did not suit my neighbour.

'Pay his fare, indeed!' she remarked sarcastically to the lamp overhead. 'Yes! *Very kind!* But it's only encouraging him to do worse! Now, if he was a *little boy*,' she went on (and the thought of juvenile delinquents seemed to affect her deeply), 'a boy, a young lad, I don't say . . . I'd 'a' given 'im credit!'

The philanthropic lady did not admit criticism.

'I'm a Christian,' she said stiffly, 'and I have great sympathy with any one that goes wrong.'

My friend's enthusiasm over this sentiment knew no bounds. Hurling herself forward in a fervour of acquiescence that all but landed her in the speaker's lap, 'God bless you, dear!' she cried in a broken voice. 'So do I! And what *I* say is, you *must* have 'em, good . . . *and* . . . bad!'

The philanthropic lady sat well back and gazed ostentatiously out of the window.

It now occurred to me, as my friend dozed off again, that I could take her down with impunity under her very nose, as though she were addressing a public meeting (and my impression is that at times she believed herself to be so doing). Next time I righted her in her seat I waited, therefore, with pencil ready poised for the next remark. It came as pat as though there had been no break.

'Ah!' she murmured, promptly but vaguely, 'what I say is . . . if those people who are bad . . .' (a long pause) '*they ought to be shut up!*'

This unexpectedly severe sentiment, delivered with great decision, again lured the philanthropic lady from her fastness. Here was an occasion which it beseems the initiated to improve. With a pomposity that the written word cannot hope to convey, she remarked, to my great astonishment and admiration:

'We must take into consideration *hereditary law!*'

My friend was not at all impressed.

'Decidedly such, dear!' she agreed airily. 'But what are you going to *do*? It's a Phase of Society!' And now, for the first time, she struck the note that dominated most of her subsequent utterances—the unmistakable diction and cadence of the informal prayer-meeting. 'Ah,' she moaned, 'there's nothing like living in the Lord! *He's* the personal . . . *He's* the personal . . .'

Her voice died away gradually, and, much as I longed to hear the end of that sentence, there was so much to write down that she was allowed to slumber in peace for the time being.

When next roused, refreshing sleep had done its work; her voice was loud and clear, her manner forensic and slightly aggressive.

'And *why* do I say they should be shut up?' she asked, addressing the meeting. 'So as they couldn't get into trouble!' (After all, the philanthropic lady's remark had stung her.) 'There are seven Jews in my house,' she went on. '*They* never get into trouble! That's what they turn round and tell me! *But they do!* Only they get the money like dirt' (a sniff) 'and landlord says the Jews are damned good fellers to pay, and at the finish this'll be a Jew's island!'

I expressed a hope that it would not come to that.

'Ah,' said she in tragic tones, 'isn't it dreadful to see our dear English people thrown out? Why, look at *my* house; there's a family o' Jews pays 13*s.* for four rooms, and *me*, an English person, has to pay 7*s.* for two rooms!'

I made a rapid calculation.

'Thirteen shillings for four rooms,' I said, 'and 7*s.* for two. That's all right, surely?'

'All right?' she echoed. 'Of course it's *all right*, but *ain't it 'ard?* Why, look at the ways of 'em! You'll hardly believe it, but . . .'

Here I find myself obliged to paraphrase, for it now became a question of technical procedure in Israelitish communities at an interesting and critical moment in the lives of married ladies. I may add that the information given where I have broken off, though obviously meant to startle and horrify, conveyed nothing whatever to me; but I saw that the philanthropic lady was listening in spite of herself.

'Only last week,' continued my neighbour, 'I was called in to a young woman. . . . It was Dr. Swyers of Shoreditch called me in—you know 'im, I dessay?' (I said that I had never met Dr. Swyers.) 'Well,' she went on, 'that same young Jewish person—and a sweet young thing she was, too—she kept on crying out, "Give me an *ENGLISH* woman! It's an *ENGLISH* woman I want!"' (her rendering of this impassioned request must have been audible in the next compartment). 'And I said to her . . .'

What my friend said to her must be omitted; it was a persuasively-worded appeal to submit to the methods employed on such occasions in Christian sick-rooms.

At this point the philanthropic lady incredibly interjected:

'*But you must remember the Mosaic Law!*'

The other glanced at her, a world of withering rectitude and propriety in her eye.

'Ah,' she said, 'but consider the doctor and a room full of people ! !' Then, addressing herself to me, as the more sympathetic listener, she described how Israel had fought for its own beside that bed, to be routed, single-handed, by Christendom in the end. 'And bless you,' she wound up cheerfully, 'while they were talking I got her out of her trouble in no time !'

The philanthropic lady refused to leave it at that.

'One can't blame people for wishing to abide by their own customs,' she remarked, with finality.

'*Customs* indeed !' jeered my friend. 'Why, look what their customs *are !* Look at 'em when they go to death ! Just think of *us* . . . so sympathising, so beautiful to our little dead children ! Why, them Jews'll lay out their little ones on a trestle and brush 'em !'

This time I was adequately startled.

'Brush them !' I exclaimed, aghast.

'Brush 'em all over !' said she, nodding violently. 'With an Ambrush.'

I imagined that this must be another item in the Mosaic Law—perhaps the equivalent of the Catholic ceremony, *Asperges*.

'What *is* an Ambrush ?' I asked.

'What they remove the bristles out o' pork with !' she replied smartly. '*That's* the Jews ! *I* know 'em ! No one better !'

By now I had of course come to the conclusion that my interlocutor must be a monthly nurse, but not liking to put a direct question felt my way.

'What is your profession ?' I asked.

She stared at me. '*Profession !*' she ejaculated, and I saw that I had given offence. Then, with immense and ponderous dignity, she said : 'I dessay

you wondered at me, madam, but it was my *'usband* I was a-kissing of on the platform!' . . .

What terrible misunderstanding was this? . . . When my scattered wits were recovered, I assured her that anyone could see that at a glance, and also that the parting caused her distress. Instantly mollified, she accepted my apologies in the spirit in which they were offered.

'Yes,' she said coyly, even bridling a little, 'I dessay you remarked us . . . the very first time it is I left him since his accident, things being so slack.'

'Did he have an accident?' I enquired.

'*Accident!*' cried she. 'The doctor says he never see anything like it. Why, the beam come down right atop of 'im; compound fracture of the skull, it was,' (the next detail of the devastation wrought by the beam is here omitted) 'and 'is poor legs was something dreadful!' Overcome at the recollection, she now became maudlin. 'Yes! it was my *'usband* I was a-kissin' of . . . my dear, dear 'usband . . . my own flesh and blood!'

I saw the philanthropic lady glance in a terrified manner at the speaker, then at my notebook, and finally resume her fixed study of the landscape. I think she was calculating how soon the train would arrive at her own station.

After writing for dear life, I asked my friend if she had any other family.

'I have, dear,' she replied; 'two sons I have, two good sons; one in the plumbing and gas-fitting line, a beautiful, lovely, handsome boy! And one a soldier as I am going down this day to Aldershot to see.' (A long-drawn sigh.) 'Ah! it was only the slackness

that drove my son away from me, my own, brave, sailor boy!'

This was too much of a good thing for a chronicler bent on accuracy.

'I thought you said he was a soldier?' I remarked.

'I did, dear,' she allowed; 'but he was invalided out with fits when the old Queen died. "But, lor', mother," 'e said, "I'll have no fits on dry land!" *Nor he ain't!* And so 'e went for a soldier—my dear, lovely boy! Now, wasn't that a . . . wasn't that a . . . ?'

Her eyes were rapidly closing, but I thought of a good rousing question.

'Is he a good son to you?' I asked.

In a second she was sitting up, wide awake, and gazing at me defiantly, her liberal mouth closed like a rat-trap. Then, delivering the words with slow, portentous emphasis: 'If . . . God . . . struck . . . me . . . *dead*,' she declaimed, 'my boy never said *shan't* to his mother!' She paused to let this sink in, and while I was murmuring congratulations, a fatuous smile gradually cancelled her expression of extreme sternness. '*And* so *beautiful* he is!' she added. 'You'll know 'im by me . . . the very living image of me!'

The family note being now firmly established, she went on without a pause:

'And a dear, loving old Christian mother I had: "Look, my Jessie child!" she said. "You may be a *wife* some day!" *And sure enough I am!*' (Here the prayer-meeting manner became very pronounced.) '*And* she taught us, *and* she was true, *and* she is in Heaven now at eighty-three, *and* rejoicing I love her words. . . .' At this point, catching hold of my arm, she whispered confidentially, with a sort of triumph: '*And my words worry my boys just the same!*'

To keep pace with her now was not an easy task, and I was glad that a short interval of meditation

occurred, before, putting her two hands together, palm to palm, like a child saying its prayers, she gave me a powerful nudge with her elbow.

'Look!' she said. 'This was my mother while she had her reason.' And once more the roof was nearly lifted, as, with tightly-closed eyes, she intoned a mother's prayer: '"Please . . . God . . . bless . . . my . . . dear-darling-little-sweet Jessie. . . . *A* . . . *men!*"' She then added, in her ordinary tone: 'At the finish she went off without her reason.'

I was speechless, while she dragged forth a handkerchief from a very inside pocket and held it in readiness.

'I know I lost an angel of a mother,' she continued, 'and an angel of a father—God rest their souls! And a dear angel of a brother I had, a p-p-preacher.' (She mopped her eyes.) 'They used to pelt 'im with eggs, but now 'e's gone they love 'im!'

'Didn't they like him before?' I asked.

'*Like* him? They couldn't a-bear 'im! And when he was took to the asylum . . .' (another little laugh) '*asylum? infirmary*, that is . . .'

'What was the matter with him?' I threw in quickly.

'Rheumatics-stone-in-the-bladder-and-erysipelas-in-'is-face,' she answered in a breath. 'And when I went to see him, "Jessie," 'e says, "how is it with your soul?" I says, "William, whatever do you mean?" "Ah, Jessie," 'e says, "remember all our little mother taught us, and oughtn't we to gratulate our mother on that point?"'

I confess that I have never interpreted this dark saying wholly to my satisfaction, nor grasped the exact meaning of the verb 'to gratulate,' as used in such a connection. But as she now became rather grave—recalling, too, her remark concerning the 'worrying' quality of a mother's words—I am inclined to think

that, true to his vocation, William had been expostulating with her on some point of conduct, and also reminding her that their revered mother had warned her on the same subject. Perhaps it was refreshment between meals.

The reflective mood, however, passed quickly, and was followed by a piece of dramatic presentment whose vigour eclipsed all previous efforts. With a roar, the effect of which on the philanthropic lady's nerves is my last impression of that now silenced moralist, she proceeded to give us further portions of the memorable interview with William :

'" *PULL UP THE WINDER-CORD !* " 'e said—and 'is dear mouth was full of thrush at the time—" pull it up," 'e said, " and let in some o' God's air, for 'e's a-callin' o' me ! " " William," I says, " for any sake don't tell me that ! " " God . . . *is* . . . a-callin' o' me, Jessie," 'e says. " Why, *just look at my mouth !* "

'Ah,' she went on, with melancholy satisfaction, 'he did die handsome, and so did my poor sister, singing :

" Jesus and the Brides are come,
Freely, freely, freely . . ." '

These lines, evidently part of a hymn the context of which one would like to hear, were chanted in a sort of loud sing-song ; after which, with one of her sudden drops into the colloquial style, she added, as it were in parenthesis :

'Then the baby came and off she went.'

I think there were further particulars concerning the poor sister's end, but my whole attention was concentrated on the task of faithfully entering the above. When next I was free to listen she was addressing the roof in her most lamentable voice :

'Ah! people go about in earthly things,' she was saying, 'and forget the Saviour.' Down her cheek trickled a neglected tear, but not a distressful one. I was glad to see she was enjoying herself thoroughly.

. . . . . .

The train was nearing Woking. I suddenly became aware that we were alone. Gone the philanthropic lady, gone the young man and his captors! Hypnotised by one fellow-traveller, I had not marked the passing of the others.

'I get out at the next station,' I observed, 'and I hope you'll have a pleasant day at Aldershot.'

My friend was deeply moved.

'Thank you, dear, for those true words,' she said, dabbing her eyes. 'The Lord sent us to be lively and pleasurable, but it ain't always easy! specially if you're suffering from . . .' (and here she mentioned a complaint which I am told is a peculiarly depressing one).

By this time I was much in love with my companion, and longed to give some expression to my sentiments. Could I venture on the next step? She seemed such a thoroughly good soul that I thought the risk might be taken.

'You tell me times are bad,' I said, 'and your husband out of work. I'm not a rich woman myself, but if you will not think it a liberty . . .' Here I pulled out half-a-crown.

The train had just come to a standstill. My friend struggled to her feet, extended both arms like twin semaphores, and burst into a loud fit of weeping.

'When I got into this carriage,' she sobbed, her voice gradually rising in a sort of *crescendo* howl, 'the word I said was: "If ever I see a Heart o' *GOLD* . . . that's one!"' And, flinging her arms round me, she squeezed what she had been good enough

to describe as a Heart of Gold convulsively to her bosom.

There was barely time to get out before the train went on. As it rounded a curve I saw, among many signal-posts, the damp handkerchief that had played such a prominent part in our interview still jerking frantically at a window.

. . . . . .

The tragic thing is that in the excitement of the moment I omitted to ask my friend for her name and address ; nor did it occur to me later on to apply to Dr. Swyers of Shoreditch for information concerning one who doubtless was the best-known householder in his district.

When, only last month, a friend[1] of mine, to whom I communicated the blurred contents of the famous notebook, remarked that this would have been the course to pursue, moved by a simultaneous impulse, we both rushed to the telephone book. . . .

Alas ! it was too late ! Seventeen years have elapsed since that memorable interview, and Dr. Swyers is probably dead. In any case, he is not on the telephone—which amounts to the same thing.

PARIS. *July* 1920.

[1] Mr. Edward Shanks.

THE QUOTATION-FIEND

THE most maligned man in history, one whose memory I propose not only to defend but to extol, is the man who complained that *Hamlet* was a boring play full of quotations, thereby proving the soundness of his literary instinct. Honour to this anonymous critic, whose sensitive though unlettered brain, stunned into apathy as one well-known phrase after another came booming across the footlights, finally struck work, and failed to perceive certain other features about a drama that otherwise should have held the attention of so discriminating a listener!

To come to the point and speak seriously. The habit some writers indulge in of perpetual quotation is one it behoves lovers of good literature to protest against, for it is an insidious habit which in the end must cloud the stream of thought, or at least check spontaneity. If it be true that *le style c'est l'homme*, what is likely to happen if *l'homme* is for ever eking out his own personality with that of some other individual?

Of such sinners there are two classes. And to neither class belongs Montaigne, that wisest and most adorable of authors, whose every page is literally packed with quotations and who may be used as a weapon in counter-argument. But with Montaigne it is a method, a sort of game. One cannot think of him otherwise than walled-in with leather-bound volumes, snowed under by slips of paper, testifying with one piece of

evidence after another to the universality of some intensely Montaignesque sentiment he has just driven into the bull's-eye with the shaft of his wit. No; Montaigne is in a class by himself, though possibly the learned may tell us he was merely the supreme exponent of a mannerism of his epoch. Even so, his selections are those of genius naked and unashamed, and his mighty hall-mark is on every one of them. Moreover, firstly and lastly, *that style is Montaigne.*

Putting this giant aside, then, it may be said that quoters either belong to the race of the timid, or else are simply people bent on showing off their culture. These latter are not worth arguing with. Through their whole being runs a flaw that will for ever keep them safely in the ranks of the second-rate. But hoping perhaps to catch the ear of the other type of quoter, it is worth while calling attention to a fact which I think will be found indisputable, namely, that the majority of critical, and plenty of uncritical, readers find quotations a bore. If so, why?

To begin with, the aspect of inverted commas is unpleasant—an eyesore on the page, a break to the continuity of the line, a knot in the string, a foreign body in the soup. Tripped up and thrown out of your stride, this deadly symbol is, alas! but the herald of worse trouble to come. 'Who said that?' you ask yourself (unless you happen to be Mr. Edmund Gosse, or some such dread specialist). Good-bye to peace of mind till you find the answer to that question. And whether you find it or not, a still more insoluble riddle follows close on the heels of the other: 'Why doesn't the writer put the thing in his own language?'

If quotations are sparsely used and superlatively rare in quality, their intrusion may perhaps be justifiable. But the odd thing is that even subtle and fastidious writers not only abuse the habit, but are

found employing the veriest tags that, for some obscure reason, or perhaps by mere chance, have been caught up in the cogs of language—to become the halfpennies and farthings of cultured provincial journalism. Phrases such as ' 'Tis true, 'tis pity,' ' Small by degrees and beautifully less,' and a hundred such. The quotation-fiend suddenly presses a button, up jumps one of these *clichés*, and the pen slips out of control. No need to read the next few words it traces, for you can declaim them with your eyes shut.

I am told there are writers, such as the late Andrew Lang, who, though much addicted to quotation, rifle pockets for the sake of some exquisite jewel only, and will never drag up into the light of day a mere Palais Royal gaud. But it is with the living that I am concerned, among them an author far too deeply loved and admired by me to pillory here, in whom of late I have detected symptoms of this malady—symptoms which, however, disappear by magic as the current of the story strengthens, the passion deepens, and the whole rushes on to a fine and quotationless end.

Again, I am of course not referring to enlisted phrases such as evoke in the memory of a normally-lettered individual a whole situation, and crystallise some state of mind we have all experienced under similar circumstances. For instance, at the present moment every one is sick of the question ' What is to be done with the Kaiser ? ' ; and none of us would blame the exasperated person who might quote on this point the immortal remark of the debilitated cousin in ' Bleak House ' : ' Better hang the wrong fella than no fella.' But it is quite another thing being held up every third line by mention of the rose that by any other name would smell as sweet ; or the still more tiresome fresh fields and pastures new which deserve their usual fate of being inaccurately quoted.

In my humble opinion the impulse to build some one else's remark into your text is begotten of lacking self-confidence, of laziness, or worse, of stagnation. No doubt other writers have often put a thing more brilliantly, more subtly than even a very cunning artist in words can hope to emulate, a supreme phrase being a bit of luck that only happens now and again. And inasmuch as the condiments and secret travail of human nature are always the same, and that certain psychological moments must ever and ever recur, what more tempting than to pin down such a moment with the blow of a borrowed hammer?

I say the writer must resist this temptation and do his best with his own tools. It would be most convenient for us musicians if, arrived at a given emotional crisis in our work, we could simply stick in a few bars of Brahms or Schubert. Indeed many composers have no hesitation in so doing. But I have never heard the practice defended; possibly because that hideous symbol of petty larceny, the inverted comma, cannot well be worked into a musical score. On the whole, given the weakness of human nature, it is perhaps as well that this particular temptation is out of our reach.

Often and often I turn over in my mind the excuses, the justification of their evil practices, put forward by quotationers—if in this painful connection a painful word may be invented. A good quotation, so they maintain, is a shaft of light thrown into the dark places of memory—a welding of one's own humble thought with that of great ones in the past—a free present to lovers of literary beauties and curiosities. These and many other things do they maintain.

But all this seems to me as nothing compared with the vital necessity of doing your job yourself. To seek, and not rest till you find an individual and adequate garment for your elusive vision is bracing to the brain

whereas the other procedure is enervating. And though your own wording may give you less satisfaction than the perfect phrase you are tempted to borrow, the general quality of your work will certainly gain in the end.

Finally : granted that to practise austerity on this point would deprive many really sensitive and discriminating writers of a subtle and exquisite pleasure, surely, surely it must be better fun still to coin your own quotations ? If you can.

February 1920.

If some people are right, artists are put into this world not to practise their art, but to talk about it. And judging by the flattering invitations many a humble climber will receive to pontificate from the lowest rung but one of the ladder, humanity is in a dangerously receptive frame of mind, and artists a race devoid of either modesty or sense of humour.

This does not imply that all need deprive themselves of the pleasure, or, indeed, are exempt from the duty, of pontificating. There can be nothing more delightful, I should imagine, to one who has fought his way into the heart of Central Africa than to relate his experiences —and nothing more right and proper than to do so. He has gone there to encounter and overcome difficulties, and there is no shame in talking about them. That is part of the adventure.

The artist is in a different case. He is carrying something in his bosom that is sacred to him, something like a lantern which, if kindled, will, he believes, shed light. The wind and rain that quench his flame and his hopes again and again are incidents that no doubt lend themselves to comic treatment, but it was death to him at the time ; and like the soldiers who struggled back from Mons, he does not care to talk about that part of his campaign. The story may be of use to future fighters, but if it is worth telling, it is for the fighter's friends, not for himself, to tell it.

Let these describe, in as harrowing a style as they command, the various Stations of the Cross, point the moral, pontificate vicariously, and do all the things it is repellent to the man himself to do.

If therefore this account of some six months spent in Berlin, in the winter of 1901–2, is woven around the first performance of my opera *Der Wald*, it is because that is the scaffolding and cannot escape mention. But to the writer the interest lies elsewhere, as I trust these pages will reveal. Having said which, the scaffolding shall take its proper place on page Number 1.

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Early in 1901 I had played *Der Wald* to the authorities at Dresden. It was not yet orchestrated, but this was my second operatic attempt, and, if it may be said without boasting, my first opera, *Fantasio*, had satisfied the sternest critics in the matter of instrumentation. As far as I knew, *Der Wald* was accepted at Dresden ; I was urged to get on with the full score and send the whole to Schuch, the head conductor, after which the terms of the contract would be drawn up. It appeared that recently an opera had been accepted in piano score only, being written by one who everybody supposed must know how to orchestrate effectively ; ' but,' said Schuch, ' this is how it sounded ' . . . and he got up and sat down on the bass end of the piano. After this experience Count Seebach the ' Hof Intendant ' had declared, that never again, unless in the case of old hands, was a contract to be signed till Schuch had seen the instrumentation.

This seemed reasonable, and by July my completed score was in his hands ; but a few weeks later I got a letter saying that after all *Der Wald* could not be produced in Dresden. As no reason was given I asked whether they were dissatisfied with my orchestration

or what? but this and one or two other letters only elicited the parliamentary reply that there was nothing to add to the previous statement. There was a large English contingent at Dresden, sedulous frequenters of the Opera, whose interests, as I knew before I went there, played some part in the drawing up of the repertory, and who would certainly have been interested in an English work; moreover *Der Wald* was only a one-act opera, which of course involves a minimum of risk and outlay. Hence its rejection seemed incomprehensible. But my subsequent experiences were to induce a belief that the Boer War had something to do with it.

None, I think, except those who had the misfortune of finding themselves on the Continent at that time, can have any idea of the fanatical hatred of England that then possessed other nations; and truth to tell, it is not surprising. Evidently nothing can save from industrial exploitation a pastoral people, in the heart of whose territory lie some of the richest gold mines in the world. But the March of Destiny is not always an edifying spectacle, and its instruments seldom play a sympathetic part. It may have been President Kruger's own fault if a process of infiltration turned into warfare, but all that the world saw was a big nation crushing a small one.

To give an instance of the prevailing state of mind, I remember that at an International Exhibition that was being held somewhere—I think at Paris—in 1900, the Transvaal Section gradually became the scene of daily Anglophobe demonstrations. On one of these occasions, an Englishwoman, seized apparently with dementia, walked up to President Kruger's bust and spat upon it; whereupon the crowd, after a moment's bewilderment, began to treat her in like fashion; and eventually she was escorted out of the building by the

police to avoid being lynched. It so happened that, the day after reading about this incident, Mrs. Robert Crawshay and I went to see the Empress Eugénie, and found her entertaining two mild old ladies in black satin and white caps, who turned out to be the daughters of a missionary in South Africa. Of course I took the opportunity of telling my anecdote, and everybody laughed except the two old ladies, who looked very grave; one saying, 'Oh, I don't at all approve of that!' and the other adding, 'It was not at all ladylike!' Whereupon Mary Crawshay remarked, 'Or even gentlemanlike!'

Nevertheless, and in spite of the Dresden rebuff, inasmuch as there was no outlet for English opera in England, I again turned my thoughts to Germany and decided to have a try at Berlin. There was no English colony there, and the Opera was not up to the Dresden level, but in England I had made great friends with Muck, the first conductor at the Opera House, whom I admired greatly as musician, who had dined frequently at my sister Mrs. Charles Hunter's house, and who had been genuinely struck by such parts of *Der Wald* as I had shown him. Besides being a fine musician he was the straightest of men, and I knew his appreciation was genuine—not merely a form of acknowledgment for a good dinner.

In September, therefore, I went to Berlin, and being well aware that in the opera world things are not as they seem, and that the real and the apparent potentates are seldom one and the same person, I proceeded to reconnoitre the situation. Sir Frank Lascelles, our then Ambassador, being a friend of my sister's, I was in luck as to my basis of operations, and will say at once that but for the kindness of himself and his daughter Florence I doubt if I could have put through the adventure that lay before me.

Three powers are concerned in the running of a Court Theatre. There is the Hof Intendant, generally one of the great nobles of the State, whose relation to the actualities of his opera are generally such as were, in old days, that of the Master of the Buck-Hounds to the Kennels. (There are exceptions to this rule—men like Count Seebach of Dresden and Herr von Hülsen of Wiesbaden who were really, and not only nominally, at the helm—but these were rare.) Then comes the business manager, I think he was called Director in those days, who, together with the third power, the leading conductor, is really responsible for all things.

I soon found out that the supreme power at Berlin was Director Pierson, a German Jew with an English strain somewhere. He was a deeply musical individual, a fine judge as to the worth, whether artistic or financial, of the operas submitted to him, and supreme of *flair* as regarded the capacities of young artists. He would pick out talent, however deeply concealed under the napkin of immaturity or shyness, and see that talent through. Every thread in the web of corruption and intrigue that then enwrapped the Berlin Opera was held by him, and I was informed that the Hof Intendant, Count Hochberg, a musical and most amiable *grand seigneur*, not unamenable to judicious flattery, was wax in Pierson's hands.

Count Hochberg was still in the country, so I forthwith went to Pierson and performed my opera at the piano in true composer's fashion, which includes a rendering of all the choral and orchestral effects as well as the solo parts. The main idea of *Der Wald* is that the short, poignant tragedy which for a moment interrupts the tranquil rites of the Spirits of the Forest is but an episode, the real story being the eternal march of Nature—Nature that enwraps human destiny and recks nothing of mortal joys and sorrows. I saw at

once that this theme appealed to the dreaminess that pairs so wonderfully with acute business instinct in men of Pierson's race, and that the musical treatment of it delighted him.

He at once declared himself willing to produce *Der Wald* immediately after Christmas, at the same time telling me frankly that owing to the Boer War frenzy there would be difficulties—also that the Press would be merciless to an English opera written by a woman. I saw, however, that, quite apart from his estimate of the work itself, two things in the enterprise tempted him; firstly, the English blood that ran in his veins spoke for me, and secondly, the prospect of an uphill job appealed to the masterfulness of his temperament. His plan was, that though of course a contract would duly be made out, the whole thing was to be kept dark till the moment came . . . then, suddenly, he, Pierson, would demonstrate to an astonished world what sort of work a woman, an *English* woman, could turn out!

'We will mount it splendidly,' he said, 'you will be satisfied!' He bade me play it to Count Hochberg directly he came back, send the full score to Muck 'now—at once,' and go next day to Muck's house and interview him on the subject.

I did so . . . and a remarkable interview it was! One of the things I liked about Muck was the chiselled, Abbé-like profile, the frigidity, illumined now and again by a charming smile, that masked the fire he infused into the orchestras he conducted. I now found frigidity enough, Heaven knows, but no smile. 'Your work is good,' he said, 'I liked it in England in the rough; I like it now, and am willing to conduct it. . . . But there can be no friendly personal relations between us, for when I hear the word "England" I see red.' His hands clenched convulsively and the veins stood

out on his forehead . . . here was the fire, unmistakably ablaze! I knew that his wife adored England, but as if he guessed my thought he went on: 'My wife snatches the newspapers away from me . . . for reading about this horrible war of yours deprives me of appetite and sleep. . . .' I then asked whether his views would prevent his doing his best for me? He calmed down a little and said certainly not, that art is art, etc. About the orchestration he was most satisfactory, and trusting to his dear kind wife to help me where she could (a trust that the event justified) I went away, less dismayed, on the whole, than one might expect.

. . . . .

These, and other negotiations which followed, can be dismissed in a few words, though they took some time to complete,—also countless efforts of patience and diplomacy on my part, and again and again I thought all was lost. But in the meantime another source of delightful human intercourse became available in the person of Countess von Bülow, wife of the German Chancellor, who came back from the country early in October, bringing with her her mother, the well-known Donna Laura Minghetti—one of the great luminaries I have met in my life—whom I was accustomed to see every winter in Rome.

To avoid confusion later on I will mention here that Madame de Bülow's father was not the great statesman Minghetti, but her mother's first husband, Prince Camporeale, who had held the post of Italian Ambassador at various European Courts. When first I took to wintering in Rome Count Bülow was German Ambassador to the Quirinal, and consequently installed in the beautiful Palazzo Caffarelli which the wise Germans secured for their Embassy; and as Donna Laura had taken me there, I already had some slight

acquaintance with her daughter, to know whom was at once to fall under the spell of her charm. But I was not expecting to see anything of her in Berlin, where she was treated almost like Royalty; except at great functions she was invisible, and if you wanted to see her you had to demand an audience. Nor had I known that Donna Laura was to be in Berlin that autumn. But one day, all unawares, I got a note from her bidding me come to see her at the Chancellor's Palace that very day!

Donna Laura Minghetti died in the third year of the war; the kaleidoscope turns quickly, and since her death the world has been shaken to its foundations. But for many years to come, to mention her name to any one who knew her will be to see that change that comes over faces when a unique, unforgettable personality is mentioned.

Let me tell one or two stories I was told about her when first I met her in Rome . . . to become one more incandescent spark in the comet-like tail of her admirers. No doubt these stories were completely legendary, but they witness to the quality of their subject.

I was informed that when her first husband, Prince Camporeale, was Italian Ambassador in London, he was transferred elsewhere at Queen Victoria's special request because the passions inspired by Donna Laura in the hearts of certain of our ministers complicated the task of the Government. It was even rumoured that one prominent English statesman, sole though blameless preoccupation of whose life the Queen had hitherto believed herself to be, was now about to institute proceedings of divorce against the wife with whom he had lived on terms of decent, peaceful, and implacable hatred for years and years!

Another legend told of her spirited action in the matter of her daughter's matrimonial affairs. Madame

de Bülow's first husband, Count X, by whom she had a daughter, was a diplomat, an excellent man, and devoted to his wife. But unfortunately he bored her, and, what must have particularly provoked his mother-in-law, there seemed but little prospect of his rising to eminence in his career. One day Bülow came along and fell madly in love with the fascinating Countess X. A clever, bold politician, a perfect man of the world, member of one of the great North German diplomatic families and certain to reach the topmost rung of the ladder . . . this would indeed be a son-in-law after Donna Laura's own heart !

The next move she took was obvious ! . . . but unfortunately the Pope refused to dissolve her daughter's marriage. Minghetti had been, together with Cavour, one of the founders of United Italy, and perhaps the Head of the deposed Church was not inclined to oblige Minghetti's widow ; moreover, if Count X. was a Protestant, so was Bülow. I forget what exact steps were taken by Donna Laura to achieve her ends, but at the eleventh hour—it is said at the Church door—there was a hitch . . . and this is the moment at which Donna Laura is stated to have forged a telegram from the Pope ! !

As I said, I do not for a moment believe this story, but if it is not true it ought to be. And not only did the marriage take place, but in due course, although it is a stringent rule in the German diplomatic service that no man shall be Ambassador in his wife's country, Bülow became Ambassador to the Italian Government ! His mother-in-law desired her daughter's presence in Rome . . . and that settled the question.

I often think of my first meeting with Donna Laura. I was singing at a rather dank Roman tea-party, when in came a very striking looking woman of about 65

who rushed straight to the piano, sat down at my elbow, and went into ecstasies over the Scotch song I was singing. Again I sang it, and yet again . . . and presently, in deep, emotional chest-notes, my new friend was chiming in. The song was 'Here's a health to one I love dear,' and she seemed ready to die at the beauty of the lift of the final phrase—one of the exquisite things in music. Then came more and more of our folk-songs, and I saw I had to do with one of infallible musical instinct. Thus the tea-party ended for me in a blaze of delight, and after Donna Laura's departure our Ambassador's son, Captain Richard Ford, who was passing through Rome, electrified the company by saying in his slowest, clearest drawl: 'I don't know who that old woman was that wouldn't come away from the piano and kept on sayin' all the time you were singin': "Que c'est jolli! . . . que c'est bô!", but *I* thought it rather a *bore* . . . didn't you?'

Donna Laura lived in a *Palazzetto* facing the Piazza Paganica, part of the huge block that includes the Palazzo Sermoneta, and Palazzo Antici Mattei, on one floor of which lived my friend Henry Brewster ('H.B.'); and from a window of his apartment I used to see her, day by day, on the stroke of 3, shoot out of her house door and into her little brougham with the extraordinary swiftness that characterised her both physically and mentally. Her rooms were packed with beautiful things though some of the pictures bore hyper-optimistic labels, and one most Donna Laura-like feature of her reception room was a fine old pulpit-staircase draped in costly brocades that led . . . nowhere!

I never saw anyone more convinced of the shortness of life and more determined not to be bored for one single second. Every night she either dined out or

had a dinner party at home, after which she received; and everyone, in all the worlds, who passed through Rome came to pay their court. She moved about among her guests, making strangers acquainted with a frank, rapid, and highly flattering sketch of their respective personalities. Mine was generally, 'a great musician and an artist all round; an intelligent girl too—rather Bohemian but a lady'; and H.B. would be introduced, to his great amusement, as 'un giovane molto colto,' that is, 'a very cultivated youth.' This when the girl was over 40, and the youth what the Irish call pushing 50. To sum up, Donna Laura went to every ball, every concert, and every other place where fun was to be had. And if she was bored out she went, publishing the reason right and left if it was a concert.

Sometimes she consented to lunch alone, and sometimes *en tête-à-tête* with a fervent admirer such as myself. I may add that hers was the frank, discriminating greediness which I venture to think is the crown of culture. Every dish was specially recommended, as beseems a creation that had been a matter of minute technical consultation between her and her *chef*, and, if a failure, would be the subject of a scene between the two immediately after luncheon; on her part dramatic, inspired invective—on his, bowings, implorings, and protestations of willingness to die on the spot rather than dissatisfy 'Eccellenza.' I never beheld such wonderful scenes; Italy at her best.

She was splendid to look at; a profile from a Pompeian fresco, young, beautiful arms and shoulders,—in the evening a dazzling vision; for no one wore magnificent toilette more magnificently. I think hers was the most vivid personality I have ever met, the incarnation of fire—a very great lady who did everything in her own way and on no recognised model.

But one must not imagine she was merely a brilliant figure in society; she read everything worth reading, adored poetry, worshipped beauty in every form, and whether it was a question of art, literature, or human beings, her intuitiveness amounted to genius. It seemed as if she could not go wrong.

I am bound to confess that as regards music she would go mad about a song—for instance Lalo's 'La Captive'—and for a time refuse to listen to anything else; 'pour le moment il n'y a que cela,' she would say. And as likely as not, a year later, meeting the same song in a heap of other music, she would cast it aside with 'Ah non! pas cette vieille machine-là!' No laying of flowers on abandoned altars for Donna Laura!

But one of the qualities in her that chiefly enchanted me is one many Italians possess though not often in such superb company, not often blended with such striking intellectual gifts—I mean her peasant-like nearness to nature. When I read out to her, from notes taken at the time, a certain adventure of mine related elsewhere,[1] she was lying on her bedroom sofa and supposed to be 'souffrante'—but at one passage, (which alas! had to be omitted here) such was her ecstasy, that she literally kicked her two agile legs high in the air, and one of the Cinderella-sized bedroom-slippers flew right over her head!

And now that, thanks to her being in Berlin, I came to know her daughter well, I often asked myself which of the two I admired most, which I was fondest of? The mother was the more brilliant personality, but I think Madame de Bülow's was the deeper nature; her friendship would probably be more dependable, her kindness well up from a deeper spring. And I knew

[1] 'An Adventure in a Train,' p. 119.

her character must be on noble lines, for years ago when first I saw her I had instantly thought of the Roman Campagna !

She was now over 50 and had been very handsome in her youth; and though nowadays she was only handsome occasionally, it was easy to credit all one had heard about the passions she had inspired . . . and in one or two cases reciprocated. People who have been much loved retain even in old age a radiating quality difficult to describe but unmistakable. Even a stone that has been blazed on all day by a southern sun will hold heat long after nightfall ; and Madame de Bülow, who was far from being a stone and not yet at the close of her day, had this warm radiance. A sort of Creole charm was hers—the laziness of an Oriental, derived, perhaps, together with her instinct for beauty, from her Sicilian ancestors, combined with the subtlety of the Italian, the unworldliness of S. Francis, (which is a quality quite compatible with worldly knowledge) and a gift of unlimited kindness. Besides all this she was an admirable musician, and in every drop of blood in her body an artist, as was manifest in the decoration of the Chancellor's palace. The Emperor, who was devoted to them both, had given her *carte blanche*, and the result was a magnificent Roman *palazzo* in the heart of Berlin—the only possible setting, I often felt, for the lady of the house.

The first result of the return of these two ladies to Berlin was a message from Donna Laura to Count Hochberg. And lo ! the meeting with him which I had been trying to achieve for three weeks instantly took place ! But there were many details yet to be settled before I could return to England, and it gradually became an institution that I was to go and make music with Madame de Bülow every day at 6 p.m. ; 'music is the one bit of real life I have in the 24 hours' she

once said. On one occasion the Chancellor looked in—I suppose to take stock of this protégée of his women kind—and after that I was often asked to dine *en famille*, and thus had ample opportunity to form an opinion of the statesman who, they said, was responsible for the foreign policy of the German Empire rather than the Emperor.

In those early days I was not favourably impressed. Obviously a remarkable man, he was also a polished cynic, and I thought, rather overdid the part of villain of the piece ; on the other hand he was too much of a professional charmer to inspire confidence—all of which impressions were to merge, under the influence of his extreme friendliness towards me, in qualified admiration and unqualified personal liking, if one may lay a humble tribute at so exalted a shrine. Meanwhile he struck me at once as being one of the few real gentlemen and men of the world it had been my fortune to come across in Germany, and whenever he either looked at his wife or spoke to his dog I loved him unreservedly.

Sir Frank Lascelles told me that ten or twelve years ago when he and the Bülows were at Bucharest, he had gained the impression which was to be mine later that Bülow lived on two things only, politics and his wife, and certainly I never saw a more devoted and adoring husband. And no wonder ! Often, when I found her lying back comfortably in the corner of her sofa—lazy, sunny, dreamy, sincere, and yet so light-hearted and pagan—I thought what a repose it must be to him just to let his weary eyes rest on this intensely intelligent woman with a child's soul ! Such was the burden carried by the Chancellor of such a master, that he seldom saw her for more than two hours in the day—often less. But one felt he could not have existed without those two hours ; and she knew it, and was

proud of the fact—as of her husband and his career generally.

On the other hand she literally worshipped her mother, who, in some ways, was even more childlike than she herself; hence the rôles would sometimes be inverted, and I used to say to myself that Madame de Bülow was more like a mother to Donna Laura than a daughter! Meanwhile Donna Laura was old, and not always in the best of health—and Madame de Bülow was the apple of her eye. Thus the Chancellor's wife was torn between two human preoccupations and duties, and on the day when she suddenly told me all this she made a friend of me for life.

Donna Laura's relations with her son-in-law seemed excellent, but I gathered from other sources that at one time there had been difficulties. She belonged on one side to the Italian branch of the Actons (founded in Nelson's time), had a passion for England and English ways, and I do not think that any chord in her nature can have vibrated sympathetically to the German touch. She did her best to keep this fact to herself, of course, but in one so vivacious and impulsive it was bound to leak out occasionally. I heard, too, that this widow and confidant of a great statesman, this *charmeuse* who still had influence in high places everywhere, sometimes found it hard not to put in her oar in a matter which certainly did not concern her, German statecraft, and that there had been friction between her and her son-in-law on that account, including very plain speaking on his part. But all this was a thing of the past, and now they were capital friends.

As I could safely utter all my thoughts to Donna Laura, I did not disguise from her that I was not attracted, so far, by Count Bülow, and she amused me by remarking: 'ma fille me dit, pourtant, qu'il est

plutôt bon.'[1] Her handling of the marriage relation, and indeed, of all questions, was delightfully unconventional and free from reserve. She told me, for instance, that after her brilliant and restless career as Princess Camporeale was brought to a close, she felt that something more serious would now appeal to her . . . 'so I looked round and decided to marry Minghetti, who was many years older than myself.'

On the subject of German manners and customs I remember an amusing little outbreak of hers one night after dinner, when Count Bülow told us that we were to leave the gentlemen to themselves when they came in from the dining-room, as they had important matters to discuss. Donna Laura tossed her head in scorn: 'In my day,' she remarked, 'women were not pushed into corners to talk *chiffons* among themselves when serious matters were on the *tapis*! On the contrary, their opinions were sought, and listened to . . . as they are to-day in every civilised country!' . . . (This last phrase in a low tone, for the benefit of her daughter and myself.) Madame de Bülow looked at me with the intensely amused, loving, indulgent smile these outbursts of her mother would bring to her face: 'Ah!' she said, 'vous connaissez bien Maman!' As we moved off obediently to a remote spot, leaving the best groups of chairs and tables for the serious half of creation, I remarked to Donna Laura: 'You will never get out of German heads that woman are, at best, mere playthings.' 'Then, by all means,' she exclaimed, 'let us be thankful that to keep out of the men's way is the order of the day . . . *car leurs jeux sont bien lourds!*'

But exciting and entrancing as was the privilege of admission on such terms to the Bülow establishment,

[1] Yet my daughter tells me that he is a good fellow on the whole.

my sheet-anchor, my sanctuary, both now, and during the far more troublous campaign with the Opera authorities that lay before me in the New Year, was the British Embassy.

Sir Frank Lascelles, alas! is dead; not so, I am glad to say, his daughter Florence, afterwards married to Mr. (later Sir Cecil) Spring Rice, who was our Ambassador at Washington during the war. But the fact that she is alive need not prevent my saying that these two, to whom, with Madame de Bülow, I owe most of my peeps into Berlin life, were pure gold. The reproach levelled against many Embassies, that only the great ones of the world find entrance there, did not apply to this Embassy. Not only were their obscurest compatriots entertained by the Lascelles, but endless trouble was taken to find out whom it would amuse them to meet. As Florence was only a girl, Sir Frank's sister Lady Edward Cavendish, one of the most amusing of women, did the honours; and Sir Frank was known to stand high in the favour of the Emperor, whom I think he thoroughly understood and in many ways admired and respected. Donna Laura informed me that the Chancellor, too, had a great opinion of our Ambassador, whereupon I said that, among other things, he was the most absolutely *disinterested* of men. This remark of mine elicited a reply which throws an amusing flood of light on Italian conceptions: 'O, as to that,' she exclaimed, 'I can say the same for my son-in-law. *Money does not exist for him*'! . . . Explanations were useless.

Throughout all these weeks of waiting I had one great resource, golf. Sir Frank, who was an impassioned golfer, had begged of the Kaiser, and rigged up as golf course, part of one of the Royal Parks which lay in the dreary sand-dunes that surround Berlin and was about half an hour's drive from the Embassy.

was an amusing course, although, as may be imagined, there was a good deal of niblick work even when you were on the so-called 'pretty.' All the attachés were golfers, which Sir Frank said was lucky, otherwise they would all have been hounded off by me to South Africa —so intolerable to me was the idea of anyone not volunteering for the war. For alas! we seemed as far off as ever from the end.

. . . . . .

Those were times calculated to put a strain upon English Ambassadors all over Europe, but especially on the one accredited to the Court whence the Kruger telegram had proceeded. Day by day the German newspapers were full of the supposed atrocities committed by the English troops in South Africa, and a faked photograph of an English soldier twirling a Boer baby on his bayonet went the round of them all. To this incident I owe one of those phrases that sum up a perennial state of mind, especially in the Fatherland, and haunt one amusingly to the end of one's life. 'Do you really believe,' I said to my old friend Johanna Röntgen,[1] who had come over from Leipzig for the day—'you, who have English friends, and know English literature—that our soldiers impale little children?' Johanna's excited and convincing reply was: '*Es steht ja in meinem Blatt!*'—that is, 'it is in my newspaper'! And I happened to know that her newspaper was one of the vilest, most heavily subsidised rags in Germany! Further, these stories were officially supported by a remark made in the Reichstag by some responsible person, to the effect that atrocities were only to be expected of undisciplined mercenaries such as our troops. Thereupon Mr. Chamberlain replied in the House of Commons that our troops were as patriotic and highly disciplined as the German or any other

[1] See *Impressions that Remained.* (Longmans.)

army. Then the German Government threw the reins on its own neck, and Bülow begged, furiously and officially, that the German army be not mentioned in the same breath as what he implied were English savages.

Among many errors made in German statecraft none was greater than this. Up to now the pro-Boer party had been of some account, and as usual there were many wobblers in the Liberal camp. But this speech of Bülow's changed the scene; Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's remarks about 'barbarous methods' were to prove nails in his coffin (for they were never forgotten) and Lord Rosebery came forth from his tent with a trumpet call that restored the equilibrium of the wobbling Liberals. Thanks, too, to Bülow, our Government now saw itself healed of private dissensions and uncertainties, the noble Lord's comments on which I found thus trenchantly summarised in a newspaper: 'Lord Rosebery did just give it Brodrick last night, not 'alf!' remarks a bus-driver. 'What did 'e say 'e'd do?' asks the conductor—'What did 'e say 'e'd do? . . . Why, 'e said that if 'e couldn't do things better with 'is foot than Brodrick done with 'is 'eadpiece, 'e'd go an' drown 'isself!' And the end of it was that the pro-Boer Mr. Lloyd George, to whom, as much as to any one man, Europe owes salvation to-day, made a picturesque exit from the Birmingham Town Hall in the disguise of a policeman.

All this, which took place in the autumn of 1901, will show among what shoals and quicksands the British Ambassador was called upon to manœuvre, . . . and my own navigation in the treacherous waters of the Berlin Opera House became hourly more difficult. Nevertheless the cast and the approximate date of the *première* were settled before I left Berlin at the end of October. I remember that when I went to say goodbye to Donna Laura she was not well and lying down

on a sofa in her bedroom ; none the less she leaped up to pull her Extract Book out of a drawer, and show and explain to me some lines of Browning she had just copied into it !

I went home by Copenhagen in order to make the acquaintance of the Benckendorffs, new and great friends of a friend of mine, Maurice Baring, then attached to the British Legation at Copenhagen. That visit has nothing to do with this story, but a writer may be allowed a passing reference to a good hour—the hour in which one of the most valued relations of her after-life was begun.

After a few days at Copenhagen I returned to England, and spent a strenuous two months revising the orchestral parts of *Der Wald* and seeing to the thousand and one things that have to be seen to on these occasions ; such as drawing plans of the stage, of the action, of the lighting required, etc., to think out which beforehand saves time. This, and training the infant mind of a sheep-dog puppy of the Old English tailless breed, named Pan, (successor to the beloved Marco, deceased) occupied me fully till the day dawned when I reluctantly packed up my scores and once more started for Germany.

II

I got back to Berlin on December 29th, to discover that after all there was no particular hurry, since *Der Wald* could not come out as soon as Pierson had hoped —the usual fate of new operas, except in admirably organised theatres like Dresden and Munich. I found the air tense with the anticipation of the opening of the Reichstag which was to be about the 10th January, on which occasion the Chancellor was expected to make a speech that would either lessen or increase the friction

between Germany and England. Sir Frank, who was an old enough hand to gather information from all available sources, no matter how humble, cross-questioned me as to my impressions concerning the state of public feeling in England ; and he also told me, a day or two before the opening of the Reichstag, that he had been unofficially assured that the tenour of the anxiously-awaited pronouncement would be soothing and satisfactory.

I have reason to think he was as astonished and horrified as outsiders like myself, when that speech turned out to be one of the most offensive, even threatening utterances that had ever issued from the Chancellor's suave lips—the kernel of it being that if England tried to bully Germany she would find herself 'biting on iron' !

I have not yet said that Madame de Bülow held aloof completely from politics, and all the world knew that political conversation bored her to death. This attitude may have been inspired by what the Italians call '*astuzia*'—a prettier thing than astuteness—for it put a wall between her and possible intriguers who, in spite of Bismarck's *dicta* on petticoat government, might have hoped to work their ends through the Chancellor's wife. But, myself, I think the repulsion was sincere ; for Madame de Bülow was, above all, an artist, and to people of the artistic temperament nothing is more hateful than the political atmosphere. Gentle, peace-loving, fascinatingly indolent, she was the very antithesis of the sordidities and restlessness in the midst of which the professional politician thrives—and herein, I am sure, lay one of the reasons of her husband's devotion. I was a keen politician myself just then—as even artists become when their country is at war—but not a political word had ever passed between me and Madame de Bülow.

The day after the opening of the Reichstag I was due, as it chanced, to make music with her at 5.30, and my astonishment may be imagined when, after a little desultory musical trifling, she suddenly asked me what I thought of 'Bernhard's' speech? I replied that of course England would be lashed to a greater pitch of fury than ever and that one could only imagine that this was the deliberate intention of the German Government. She listened quietly, and I am certain without the faintest surprise, to my elaboration of this theme, and then said: 'Will you come to dinner to-night, and repeat all you have said to me, to my husband? You know how large-minded he is . . . that anything any one says to him is taken in good part. . . .'

This was absolutely true; he listened, and listened well, even to amateur politicians like myself; no wonder, therefore, that my previous sentiments were rapidly turning into liking and admiration! She told me that no one was dining with them except Delbrück and one or two other people whose names I have forgotten, and that I need not do anything elaborate in the way of toilette.

That dinner was one of the most interesting experiences of my life. The Chancellor was a delightful talker—gay, shrewd, witty, light in hand, and well read, though when he got the time for reading I cannot think, unless perhaps in his summer home at Nordeney. And, as I remarked before, every time he looked at, or spoke to, his wife, my heart warmed towards him. Presently he said:

'My wife tells me that you think my speech last night will inflame all England. Now *why should it?*'

Never having had occasion to plumb the depths of German ignorance of public opinion elsewhere, it seemed to me inconceivable that a child should not have known beforehand what the effects of that speech

would be; and I listened in amazement while he explained what, in his opinion, it amounted to; why, given German feeling, he could say no less; and why a calm, judicial nation like the English should understand that nothing offensive was meant. I said my say, as before in Madame de Bülow's room, and I saw that the other guests, who occasionally threw in a word, were listening attentively.

Then came a dramatic moment; enter a servant with the first telegram from London, reporting the reception of the speech in the English Houses of Parliament! Bülow read it, and saying half jokingly, 'Well, you were right!' he passed it round to his colleagues.

There are limits to the histrionic powers of ever so clever actors. As that dinner went on and telegram after telegram came in and was passed round the table, faces lengthened, exclamations of astonishment and something like dismay escaped the readers; there was no doubting the fact that the effect of that speech had *not* been foreseen by these German statesmen!

When Madame de Bülow and I left the dinner table no allusion was made to all this, and we were discussing Donna Laura, who was in Rome, and other innocuous subjects when the gentlemen came in. I remember the Chancellor, his hand full of new batches of telegrams, coming straight up to the sofa where I was sitting and dropping down beside me like a tired and rather exasperated man.

'But what do you English want and expect?' he said at once. 'Do you want us to *like* this war of yours? To look on and applaud while you are crushing a small nation?'

One generally remembers one's own answers. Mine was to the effect that if France, or some other Latin people, plunged into this hysterical and abominable Press campaign, one would say it was merely their

excitable fashion of treating public questions ; but from the Germans, a nation kin by blood to ourselves, we at least expected justice.

'My own opinion,' said he, quasi-confidentially, 'is, that *all* armies commit atrocities . . . and there's not much to choose between them' (a slight revision of that other, publicly-expressed, theory that the German army was sacrosanct and must decline to be bracketted together with undisciplined mercenaries !) I must have reproached him, as master of the Press Bureau, for not putting a stop to the newspaper campaign, as I very well remember his remarking :

'The German Chancellor is not *der Herr Gott* ! . . . he can't do everything. . . . *I* can't muzzle the Press !'

At the time I took leave to doubt this although I hope I did not say so exactly, but I came to see it was the truth, though not in the sense he meant me to understand.

The English never seem to me to have realised how much more apparent than real was the power of the Kaiser—and consequently of his Chancellor. The Prussian Junkers, beside being the chief representatives of the agricultural interest, were, as the aristocratic party, chief bulwark of the State, and a far greater power than the Court ; the Army was their instrument . . . and the Kaiser the puppet of the Army.

This was so even before the days of the German Empire, as anyone who has read Bismarck's Memoirs, and the account of the tussle between him and the King of Prussia after Sadowa, can judge for himself. The Austrians once thoroughly defeated, Bismarck wished to spare them the humiliation of the German troops entering Vienna, it being part of his plan, that when the time came for crushing France, and uniting the German States under Prussia, Austria should remain

neutral. But his old master insisted that to deprive the Army of that spectacular triumph would wreck his popularity—even endanger his throne. Bismarck describes how, seeing his slowly-built-up edifice for the union of Germany about to crumble into dust, he was standing at a window, weeping, when the Crown Prince came in and asked him if he considered the matter of such supreme seriousness ?—for in that case he would make one more effort to over-persuade the King. Eventually the Prince, 'who had no reason to be my friend,' remarks the memoir-writer, gained the day for Bismarck, at the cost of a shattering two hours' battle with his father. It took the old King weeks to forgive his Minister, but the Army never forgave him ; and the Head Quarters Staff refused to let him ride with them during the Franco-Prussian War !

Now at the time I was in Berlin Bülow's position was particularly difficult, chiefly owing to the dissatisfaction of the almighty Junkers whose landed interests were suffering under the rapid growth of industrialism. Again, the violent disturbances in the Polish Provinces, where the Junkers are large land-holders, affected them disagreeably. The Polish Question has always seemed to me Germany's Irish Question, with this difference, that the indigenous population was increasing at a rabbit-like rate, whereas the German colonists were not thriving. It was impossible, however, to trample on the Junkers as landlords have been trampled on in Ireland, and I not only wished we had a Bülow to deal with Irish affairs, but said so once to a very grand old gentleman . . . who turned out to be Prince Radziwill, leader of the National Polish Party in the Reichstag ! Such are the blunders of the amateur politician abroad, and I never saw men laugh more than did Bülow and Sir Frank over that incident !

The Chancellor being, then, in a cleft stick between

Agriculture and Industrialism, the only card he could play with the certainty of pleasing all parties was the Anti-English card. Apart from the exigencies of 'Welt Politik,' this was a great factor in his provocative attitude—one reason why he could not afford to muzzle the Press but was rather obliged to egg it on. I think he came to see that that speech of his was a mistake; and after Mr. Chamberlain's reply to it, which satisfactorily exhaled the fury of England and caused the Cabinet to rally round the speaker, the slandering of our troops died down. Chamberlain now became the *bête-noir* of the German Press, and Bülow, who had hitherto considered him a negligible quantity, began to allude to him in private conversation as a power.

I have said what the Chancellor's private opinion was as to the identical behaviour of all armies in warfare. Another instance of the difference between a statesman's public and private utterances occurs to me in the matter of the Anglo-Japanese alliance which became a fact about this time. It will be remembered how the German inspired Press raged against 'this disgraceful bond between Yellow and White,' . . . and no wonder, for one day at dinner the Chancellor allowed that this was a brilliant stroke of which he would not have believed our feeble Government capable! 'Yes,' he said, nodding his head slowly, 'on that point I offer you my congratulations!'—a compliment that seemed wrung out against the grain. 'No one in Germany will see the importance of it,' he added, 'for Germans are bereft of political instinct, and as for Foreign politics, not a single soul here knows anything about them.'

Meanwhile, as before Christmas, the needle of my fortunes veered hither and thither in sympathetic response to the political weather. One of Sir Frank's first actions when I came back to Berlin, had been to ask Pierson to lunch—a thing few British Ambassadors

would have done, for Pierson was not an official power, and as a certain junior secretary remarked with disgust, 'not quite up to Embassy form.' But Sir Frank was one of those great gentlemen who are equally at ease with crowned heads and understrappers. A little later on, Pierson informed me that for many reasons the production of *Der Wald* had better be postponed to the middle of March, but when I asked whether he would advise postponing the whole thing till calmer times, he answered : 'Certainly not ; say nothing, and when the moment comes, it will be put through all right.' So I made up my mind to cultivate patience and see as much as possible of Berlin life.

I found it absolutely odious, and should never have believed that, even in military-mad Germany, human beings could consent to exist on terms of such abject subservience. The Kaiser was alluded to in an awed, hushed whisper, and I noticed that anyone who pronounced an unorthodox opinion, such as admiration of modern pictures or music—both of them among his abominations—would be marked 'dangerous' and avoided by the discreet. In fact, those two words 'der Kaiser,' swallowed up every other conception in the Berlin brain, and distilled a brew of servility, terror, snobbishness and moral cowardice that defertilised all surrounding regions. Conversation was not possible, but merely the interchange of guarded phrases, as among people surrounded with spies : if you asked your neighbour whether he liked his potatoes mashed, he would qualify the reply lest some hostess in the vicinity should recently have given him fried potatoes. I used to speak freely to the Bülows about all this and rather gathered that the Kaiser liked the idea of all Berlin trembling in its shoes, each man in terror of the man above him, and all in terror of him ; a terror

tempered with admiration in his case, but none the less mortal dread. In fact, Berlin seemed to me what it was, the capital of a huge slave-state rather than a centre of civilised society.

It was a characteristic touch, too, that, even as in mediæval Courts the Jester afforded one spot of relief, so in this manacled and hobbled world there was a certain Baroness L., belonging to one of the great families, who, as official and privileged *enfant terrible*, was supposed to say and do anything she liked, even to the extent of playing the *cornet-à-piston* to the Kaiser at grand dinner-parties—a painful manifestation, indeed, of chartered liberty and licence. Yet the spectacle of this young lady, as *décolletée* as was then permissible and smothered in jewels, blasting away on her uncompromising instrument, was certainly amusing in a *milieu* whose even surface of caution and restraint was otherwise unruffled. The only really great lady except Madame de Bülow whom I had the good fortune to meet in these exalted regions, and who, though sincerely admiring the Kaiser in many ways, dispensed with the official attitude towards him, was Princess Antoine Radziwill, sister-in-law of the Prince Radziwill to whom I addressed the tactful remark quoted above . . . and she was not a German, but a Frenchwoman, *née* Castellane !

It seems unnecessary to say that all this was part of the canker that was eating up Germany, militarism gone mad—a subject that has been discussed to satiety. But one amusing result of it may have escaped mention, namely, its effect on the success of the Embassy parties. In response to a regimental invitation, some ten or twelve officers would file in like animated ramrods, click heels, mention their names to their hosts, click again, proceed to make the round of the chief personages present, (still in file), salute these similarly, then wheel

and stand in a row, backs to wall, for some specified time. And when that time had elapsed they took their departure in exactly the same fashion. Not for them to make themselves agreeable! They had honoured the function by their presence, an item of drill had been brilliantly performed, and that was enough. One day an American girl remarked with disappointment: 'I did think they'd either come in or go out goose-stepping!'

But worst of all was the whole-hearted and bare-faced pursuit, at all costs, of the interests of Number One, that informed the bosoms of these Prussian Officers. A magnificent old warrior of 1870, General von Loë, a great friend of Countess Bülow's and of her mother's, used to assure me that this was not so in his youth, when comradeship meant genuine fraternity. 'Now,' he said, 'as far as I can judge, one young fellow would actually refrain from pointing out a pitfall to another!' There was a certain Colonel, a Saxon I had known in Leipzig years ago, with whom I was on excellent terms, and one day at dinner I asked him if this was true? He laughed. 'There are few of my young fellows,' he said, 'who wouldn't walk over the body of their own brother to preferment,' and addressing with humorous condescension a Lieutenant who sat opposite us, he asked him if that were not so? Whereupon the young man, galvanised into rigidity, uttered the ritualistic formula: 'Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!' ('At your orders, Mr. Colonel!')—the only reply a subaltern is permitted to make to a superior officer. But a smile of flattered vanity and charmed acquiescence irradiated his correct, wooden, Leutnant-face.

For one result of the Kaiser Cult I was wholly unprepared, and I confess it shocked me not a little. Apparently the disease was catching, and it became obvious that some of our own countrymen had caught

it. One day at the Embassy I overheard a certain flower of the British aristocracy say to her daughter after several minutes passed in a trance—and her tone was strangely languishing and ecstasied—'Alice, did he wave his hand to us in the Thiergarten *three* times, or was it *four*?' But Alice, who was of a different grain to her Mama, answered with extreme gruffness, 'I really didn't count.' Another day, after I myself had had the unhoped for honour and delight of meeting the Kaiser, I remarked to one who was high up in the diplomatic career—and a gentleman too: 'By the by, the Emperor spoke of you.' '*What* did he say?' asked my interlocutor, with a face . . . but one must have lived in Berlin to realise what a transfiguration came over that face . . . melted, hopeful, anxious! 'He said,' I went on, '"Jack is a real good sportsman!"' 'Did he call me JACK!!' gasped my friend . . . and for very anguish of bliss his voice had a dying fall.

I never obtained, nor, given the job I had to tackle, did I seek to obtain, a glimpse into the Court; but one of the few English girls in Berlin who was invited year by year to assist at the birthday tea-parties of the Royal young people—which functions were supposed to be the last word of informality—told me that all was put through with military precision. Up to a specified hour decorum and ditchwater-dullness prevailed; then, let us say at 6 o'clock, riotous behaviour was the prescribed note. The young Princes now began solemnly throwing bits of bread at the young ladies, who responded according to schedule; till, ten minutes later, punctual to a second, the Kaiserin would come in quite unexpectedly, and say with indulgence: 'Aber Kinder, nicht gar zu übermütig!' (Not too wild, children!) Thereupon the party broke off short like a dry twig, and three minutes later the stage was empty.

My informant, a shrewd, amusing girl, used to say

it was a great pity that Prince Eitel Fritz was not Heir to the Throne. But as during the war the newspapers loved to dwell on the Crown Prince's supposed cowardice in the field, it is a special satisfaction to me to say, that even in those early days he was conspicuous for the physical prowess that no English officer who came in contact with him in later years would deny for a moment, whatever they thought of him otherwise.

I spoke of the admirable qualities of the Kaiser, as extolled by Princess Antoine Radziwill—and certainly there was not a better and less biassed judge about his Court. Among these qualities were a constant preoccupation it is impossible to question with the welfare of his people, and a devotion to duty that made his day a round of ceaseless labour. I believe it began at 5 a.m., and seem to remember Sir Frank being once waked up by an early call from the Kaiser and having to receive him in pyjamas, for the Monarch was, as always, in a hurry. None ever accused him of sacrificing duty to pleasure; indeed such was his strenuousness that I fancy he was past caring for pleasure in any form, and neglected, as do many Germans, the margin of relaxation and temporary indifference to the main issue which a long sojourn abroad has taught me is one of the strong points of England. It has a very reverse side . . . but that is another matter.

On the whole I think he was popular then, and though his subjects scoffed at his sabre-rattling I believe they liked it. It made them feel menacing and self-respecting, and certainly no ruler ever enjoyed doing it more than he. One of his great points, according to Princess Radziwill, was, that he thoroughly *liked* being Kaiser . . . this in days when even our own King Edward sometimes expressed, in private, a belief that he would be the last of his line. And behold! the

gods, accepting this tribute to the uncertainty of things human, have strengthened the roots of one dynasty and uprooted the other! But I do not think the Emperor was ever forgiven for dropping the pilot; for Bismarck was still a god—and no wonder. Count Bülow told me he considered him infallible, and I have no doubt applauded his suppression of those Liberal principles which Bismarck considered the Emperor Frederick had imbibed from his 'English wife.' I wonder what Prince Bülow, I wonder what the German people, think about that suppression to-day?

The unfortunate thing was, that the Kaiser dominated, and wished to dominate, in all fields. His tastes in Art were reactionary beyond belief, and it was about this time that he publicly thanked Heaven for the Sieges-Allee—'a monument pure of the modern art-Spirit.' I told in 'Impressions that Remained' how he would have abolished the 'Secession' if he had dared—that is, the part of the National Museum devoted to modern pictures and statuary—and how he caused these 'abominations' to be exhibited on the top floor, hoping that no one would face the endless stairs; how a magnificent Zoloaga was only saved from banishment by unheard-of efforts; how the leading German sculptor Hildebrand was in disgrace at Berlin, because, on being summoned thither to discuss the erection of some public monument, he mercilessly criticised the design which was first in the running—and which possibly was more or less the work of the only Art-Authority the Berlin sycophants recognised, namely, the Kaiser himself!

For the Kaiser really had pretensions as an artist, and I myself have seen his great picture 'The Yellow Peril,' a reproduction of which he presented to Sir Frank. The idea is a monstrous yellow dragon, emerging in one corner from blue clouds and extending

its claws over the landscape below. And if I do not venture to criticise it, it is because I remember Brahms's remark: 'One cannot be too careful in expressing an opinion of Royal compositions, for you never know who they are by.' But there is one charming and authentic anecdote of what the Emperor said to Strauss, when that great composer, who every one agrees is one of the most delightful of personalities, became first conductor at the Berlin Opera House: 'It is a pity your music is so detestable, for you are such a dear fellow!' (*ein so lieber Kerl*).

Before quitting the subject of servility I must record a striking impression of mine at the Opera. It may be remembered that during the Boxer rebellion the German Minister at Pekin, a detestable and most unpopular personality, had been murdered, and a delegation from China, at the head of which was one of the greatest Princes of the Royal Family, was sent to Berlin to apologise. The newspapers gloated over the scene in the Throne Room, how these barbarians had crawled in on all fours, kissed the steps of the Throne, and gone through various antics expressive of abject, soul-disintegrating terror at the aspect of the Great White Emperor. That night I saw the Chinese delegates seated in a large proscenium box, while opposite them, on the other side of the house, sat Prince ——, a near relation of the Kaiser's, and his suite. In the one box rigid, inhuman, humiliating official etiquette—anything that can be described as traces of culture, of the manners that makyth men, pared away by the sword; a row of uniformed automatons and a Fetish. In the other box a group of grave-faced, high-bred gentlemen, exquisitely attired, conversing softly and easily among themselves, or bending forward with the most dignified, courteous gesture possible when their Prince, who was seated beside the Chinese Ambassador, addressed them.

Whatever the formalities prescribed by Chinese ritual for occasions such as brought these Orientals to Berlin, one felt certain that they must have managed to keep their dignity.

In the midst of the arid and glittering landscape I have been trying to describe, there was one oasis—the group of intimates Madame de Bülow gathered round her occasionally at small evening parties of ten to twelve people. Sometimes there was music. Her friend, Madame 'Robbie' Mendelssohn (daughter of the Italian song-writer Gordigiani, beloved composer of my youth) was a fine musician ; so too was her husband, a Berlin banker, nephew of my old, old friend Lili Wach, who herself was Felix Mendelssohn's daughter. Anyone of distinction and refinement, whether musician, author, or painter, (of the non-official breed) was welcome at these delightful, informal gatherings. Prince Lichnowsky who when the great war broke out, was German Ambassador in London, stood in close official relation to the Chancellor, worshipped the Chancellor's wife, and was 'Hausfreund,' as they call it in Germany. I would write 'tame cat,' if that term did not imply another sort of individual to this best type of man of the world,—cultured, amusing, and absolutely independent in spirit—who always was of the party.

One I never saw on these occasions, but met once or twice at my 6 p.m. musical meetings with Madame de Bülow, was Count Philip Eulenburg, the Kaiser's great friend, of whom it was said that he had been made Ambassador at Vienna by his Sovereign as a reward for knowing more about the Drama than anyone in Germany; for about 1898 people used to reproach the Emperor with being bored to death by things military and caring only for the theatre ! Count Eulenburg was the most perfect specimen of a *grand seigneur* I remember meeting—a

magnificent looking man of about 53, like a Titian portrait, with a wonderful smile and a hauntingly sweet laugh. A more satisfactory person to play one's work to, composer could not wish to find, and as both Donna Laura and her daughter had, or seemed to have, the greatest possible respect for his judgment, I was glad that *Der Wald* appealed to him so strongly, both as story and music. I myself was rather damped off by the fact that he was a composer himself . . . after a fashion! and I could not help reproaching Madame de Bülow for expressing more admiration for his compositions than a musician of her calibre could honestly feel! But perhaps it was fantastic, even barbaric, to expect in a place like Berlin any other attitude towards the Emperor's supreme favourite!

General and Excellenz von Loë, whom I have already mentioned, was like all the adorable grandfathers, all the brave old soldiers, all the polished, self-respecting old courtiers of the world rolled into one. I have never forgotten, though I may have neglected to act on, a dictum he uttered one day, when Madame de Bülow was urging me to be more diplomatic in my dealings with the Opera authorities: 'One must be the reverse of opportunist in one's aims, but not scorn opportunism in one's means,' he said.

Sometimes I met Professor Harnack at that house, a most interesting, charming man, with an eagle's face framed in an aureole of wavy, greyish hair, and who, as my hostess remarked, was more like an artist, both physically and mentally, than like a theologian. It gave me pain to read his name at the bottom of the proclamation put forth by the leading lights of Germany at the beginning of the war . . . and I was glad to see that Strauss's name did not figure on that list.

But the most exciting of all the acquaintances I was privileged to make, thanks to Madame de Bülow

if I except One who will appear in these pages later on—was the great Greek scholar and poet Herr von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. About this time Professor Gilbert Murray had given non-classical scholars like myself an insight into Greek thought and poetry such as we had never hoped to obtain, and Wilamowitz's translations, which Madame de Bülow introduced me to, are quite as fine. Once I dined quietly with Wilamowitz, and he showed me an unknown poem of Sappho's, of the Faynum series, which he had just deciphered. Incidentally he informed me that in his opinion Sappho was the most maligned of women, that she was really a sort of High School Mistress, and the famous passions merely innocent 'Schwärmerei' between her and her pupils. Luckily it is open to those who have no Greek to reject this depressing reading of 'burning Sappho.'

III

Saint-Saëns, whom you would unhesitatingly class among the spoiled darlings of Fate, were it not that an effortless career is an illusion of perspective—Saint-Saëns, great musician and *homme d'esprit*, has said :

'Quand on ne joue pas vos opéras c'est mal . . . mais quand on les joue c'est encore pire !'

This is literally true, even under the most favourable circumstances, when you and your conductor see eye to eye. Such are the lions in your path ; such the slowness of stage carpenters and the pigheadedness of stage electricians ; such the colds and coughs that lie in wait in the wings for your troupe ; such the vanity, too, of these dear people themselves (though to some I owe large debts of gratitude, and to all a tribute of admiration for embracing such a trying career)—such, in a word, are the terrors and complications of opera-production,

that half the time you long to catch up your score and flee with it to the uttermost parts of the earth.

But never, I imagine, was opera produced under less favourable circumstances than this work by an Anglo-Saxon, and a woman, launched in the very place whence the Kaiser's celebrated dictum about woman's sphere had issued—a place which had now become the Head Quarters of an international anti-English propaganda !

As I said, the Press campaign had toned down, but Anglophobia waxed all the fiercer for being deprived of this outlet. Anti-English demonstrations were now a daily occurrence, and one day the windows of our Embassy were smashed by a mob, the Kaiser himself calling next day to express his indignation. As time went on, too, we English abstained from gazing into shop-windows, lest our turned backs should present too convenient a target for the patriotic but cautious spitter ! Finally, as finishing touch to the situation, my one rock of defence, the sole powerful friend I had connected with the Hof Oper, was swept away in the flood of misfortune, that, like the giant wave Neptune sent hurtling against the shore to madden Hippolytus's horses, now threatened to engulf me.

Pierson was a bit of a blackguard, perhaps, but also a bit of a genius. A difficult man to deal with—shifty yet reliable, maddening yet likeable, ambitious yet disinterested. Still though I guessed that he 'took money' I never doubted but that he would see me through, and well through, albeit he realised that none would be forthcoming from me. About the middle of February, however, I thought the psychological moment had arrived for his being asked to *dine* (not lunch) at the Embassy to discuss matters, . . . but just about then he suddenly began to look so desperately ill that I was terrified. And Lady Edward Cavendish, who,

like the secretary I quoted, did not consider Pierson 'up to Embassy form,' and had been casting about for a reason not to ask him, finally said in desperation : 'but from what you say he might die at table !'

Alas ! that invitation was never despatched. It may have been a judgment on poor Pierson for befriending me, for I afterwards heard that he was actually filling in the rehearsal sheets, with a view to the production of *Der Wald* on the 16th March, when the pen fell from his hand ! He was carried home unconscious and expired two days later. As I wrote to H. B. 'You will not be surprised to hear that I have killed Pierson.'

From that moment my position was desperate, for not only had Count Hochberg never been called upon to cope with the realities of theatre direction, or do anything except 'represent' Opera and the Drama at Court, but he was totally unaware of the intrigues and countless forms of corruption that underlay the whole system of management to an extent which I myself had only half realised, so far. I knew that certain singers had grumbled as loudly as they dared at having to incur unpopularity by taking part in an English work ; but Pierson was a bold and clever man who had every sort of hold on his team, and did not brook opposition. Once he had disappeared from the scene of action, however, I became aware of nothing less than a fixed intention, on the part of the Company, to make the production of *Der Wald* an impossibility.

My first intimation was a warning from a friendly baritone that the youthful heroine—an ideal Röschen, with whom I had been studying for more than three weeks—was meditating throwing up her part. She was a young American, not yet a member of the Hof Oper but what they call a 'guest'—that is, on a trial engagement ; and being so far a hot favourite with the

public (which is a great asset in a *première*) she was averse to taking risks. On the other hand it was rumoured that the Kaiser had been talking about *Der Wald*! For the moment, therefore, this particularly unblushing young thruster, who might have given a Prussian officer points in the art of trampling over anything and anyone to gain her own ends, was sitting on the fence. Now as I knew that she was more or less run by a rich old lady (I cannot recall whether German or American) who had a 'Schwärmerei' for her, I thought it wisest to go straight to this patroness, explain what was at stake for me, and make a bid for her backing.

Never was enterprise a greater failure! My representations were met with a shrug of the shoulders, my implorings brushed aside with a slight wave of the beringed hand; her dear child's interests were the paramount consideration, she said, and that very morning she had advised, nay, commanded her, to throw up the part!

The rôle of Röschen's lover, 'Heinrich,' was in the hands of a certain Herr Krauss, a stout, bellowing tenor of the 'Siegfried' type, who had a fine voice capable of tender inflections and was not a bad actor; and he too was a great favourite with the public. This singer, unable for some reason or other to wriggle out of the part, confined himself to doing his best to make things unpleasant; and his best was pretty good, for besides being of a vanity that made him take the suavest suggestion as an insult, he was one of the greatest brutes I have ever had the ill luck to meet. During the nerve-racking weeks that followed I recall two Krauss incidents. The first was when at a given moment, in my anxiety to make him believe that no offence had been intended, I rashly laid a hand on his arm; thereupon, with the voice and attitude peculiar to the stage-Joseph, he exclaimed: 'Bitte mich nicht anzurühren!'

(please not to touch me). The second was when, at some other crisis, he shouted : 'Das Frauenzimmer soll die Bühne verlassen !' To translate this phrase : 'Remove the female from the stage' is the best I can do, but no word in our language conveys the abominableness of that much-used term 'Frauenzimmer.'

And so, more or less, with the whole cast. They all had the length of Count Hochberg's foot, and would craftily ask and obtain leave, one after the other, at dates which practically wrecked a coming rehearsal or possibly caused its postponement. This I would find out, would rush to the bewildered Hochberg, show him the real 'plan of hours' as opposed to the one submitted to him, and myself suggest what should be done—for he was as helpless as a babe. Obstacle after obstacle was thus erected, discovered by me, and circumvented. I often thought it fortunate I was a woman ; firstly because I could pretend, as foolish, ignorant 'Frauenzimmer,' to believe that all this was the working of chance, whereas a man would have had to kick or shoot someone continually ; and secondly because I am certain that only a woman could have stood the strain—and many another strain connected with similar enterprises.

Thus March wore on, and by the time that events and I had proved to Hochberg that there really *was* a plot—a defiance of his authority which it was painful to his dignity to contemplate—the best part of the season was gone. And even then it was past his power to tackle the opposition effectively, for the working of an Opera House depends on a thousand technicalities of which he knew nothing. Strictly speaking they were not his business, but most Hof Intendants dislike seeming not to know the ropes. His position therefore was both difficult and humiliating, and I hated being forced by circumstances to complicate it still further, for he was a lovable man and a gentleman.

If a question here suggests itself, 'Where was Muck all this time?' the answer is that a conductor is not bound to busy himself with the preliminary study of an opera he is producing. Schuch and Mottl invariably did so, and Muck was such a big man that I am sure his usual practice must have been the same as theirs; but on this occasion the idea was to see as little of the composer as possible. Also, to do him justice, he reckoned me among the opera writers who are able to drive their intentions into the souls of their artists, though, as I have shown, this gift was of little use to me here. I fancy, too, that knowing what I was up against, he may have considered it improbable that *Der Wald* would come up for performance at all—which, to tell the truth, it would not, but that the joy of battle now possessed me . . . and also a fierce desire that England should win in the end! Finally, he knew, and so did I, his power of coming in at the last moment and pulling things together. But the last moment was far off . . . and meanwhile I got little or no help from Muck.

There are two classes of people connected with opera-production whom I have always loved and got on with, and who, if I may say so without vanity, would, I believe, have a good word to say for me; namely, the Chorus and the Orchestra.

When I use a Chorus at all, I give it a vital part in the drama—an attention they thoroughly appreciats—and nothing touches me more profoundly than their zeal and willingness. How anxious they are to enter into your intention! How far removed from the spirit it must be so hard for the principals to keep clear of . . . a selfish, personal spirit that makes the fate of the work in particular, and art in general, a matter of relative, or indeed positive indifference! Even at Berlin my work with the Chorus was always a delight.

As for members of an Orchestra, these are people who know what sort of 'stuff,' as they call it, they are dealing with—musicians, who respond to the musician in yourself and with whom it is possible to get into real touch. How splendidly the Berlin orchestra stood by me will be related by and by, but meanwhile the final stage, the day when I and they should come together, seemed to recede farther and farther on the dim horizon.

I think had an angel revealed to me at the time of Pierson's death what the future had in store for me, I should have gone straight back to England with my score. But it was only by degrees that the situation developed, and there was a great deal at stake. Dresden, and one or two previous experiences connected with my first opera, *Fantasio*, had taught me how hard it was, as woman and foreigner, to get one's work accepted at all; and without the leverage of an ice-breaking foreign performance I knew I might knock on the doors of Covent Garden till my knuckles were raw. For there is no money in a new English work produced in England. Again, my own financial position was a factor, for though I was generously helped by a rich sister, you can't live for months in an hotel for nothing. In fact I was in the situation of a mountain climber who, having reached a certain point, must either go on or else postpone that climb for an indefinite period . . . perhaps for ever.

True, there came a phase in this ceaseless tug-of-war when I spoke to Count Hochberg of throwing up the sponge, but this was a political move rather than anything else; for I knew that to let me do it would be to give himself away in the eyes of his dread master. He was aware, of course, that Madame de Bülow, the woman whom the Kaiser went more out of his way to honour than any other 'Frauenzimmer' in the German

Empire, was my friend—and whether or no the Battle of Berlin was worth fighting it never would have been won but for that fact. The immediate result, therefore, of my suggestion was, that poor Count Hochberg now made it clear to his subordinates that *the thing had to be put through*. After which, though alas! at the eleventh hour, they settled down to their job . . . it can be imagined with what good grace.

The one thing that kept me out of the Infirmary, or the Asylum, or both, was . . . golf. My neighbour at home, the Empress Eugénie, used to say that England's sons and daughters walked round the globe hitting or kicking a ball in front of them, and never was my share of this racial passion more of a god-send to me than at Berlin. As for help of another kind—the support, strength, and consolation I found at the Embassy—no one but Florence Lascelles and myself know what I owe to her and her father. It was impossible for them to intervene; even Madame de Bülow could only help indirectly. But human kindness is sometimes worth more than all the practical help in the world . . . and from them I got it, in full measure, pressed down, and running over.

One evening, on returning from golf, I found a note marked 'urgent' from Madame de Bülow, begging me to come round early next morning on important business; which I did, and learned to my inexpressible joy and surprise that the Emperor desired to make my acquaintance, and that I was to dine with the Bülows that night to meet him!! I had heard of these informal dinners at the Chancellor's palace, commanded by the Kaiser, at which no woman except his hostess was present—only certain men whom he wished to meet in a friendly, unofficial way. And it was said that on

these occasions he really enjoyed himself and was at his very best.

My wild excitement may be imagined, and also my anxious preoccupations as to clothes, which matter was discussed in theory with Madame de Bülow, and supervised in practice later by Florence Lascelles. As to what happened that evening I will print *verbatim* a letter of mine to my eldest sister, Alice Davidson. Written at a time of storm and stress it is highly condensed, and might be the better for disintegrating and serving up afresh. But as a means of making a reader feel that your tale is true and not merely constructed on vague recollections, I believe in giving a contemporary document and amplifying it afterwards if necessary. So here it is ; and I will preface by saying that at the time it was written *Der Wald* was still by way of taking place on March 16th ; that the 'stiff pull' alluded to had been the matter of getting that date fixed; and that though Pierson was dead, I had not the faintest notion then what his death would involve.

'Reichshof, Berlin.
March 11th, 1902.

'. . . I have been ceaselessly plunged from uncertainties and worries of all sorts into the exactly opposite conditions ; but then I had to forge straight ahead and deal with a hundred and fifty fidgetty little things, which stopped my writing good letters to anyone. Thus it is now nearly a week ago that I had the celebrated meeting with the Emperor.

'He sometimes announces himself to dine with the Bülows, *sans façon*, only ten or twelve men and no ladies present. A list is submitted to him, or sometimes he suggests people. But on this occasion I suspect that Madame de Bülow, who is my friend Donna Laura's daughter, proposed me as a sort of

man ; for I've noticed that, without in the least making a demonstration, she has quietly and steadily done everything to lay the train in case I should want help from above—which however is not the case.

'Well, I arrived, and found a galaxy of men ; and the Chancellor (whom I'm rather under the spell of, which is odd, as he isn't at all the sort of man I generally like) told me I was to sit next to the Emperor, and *not* next Professor Harnack—a theologian and poet combined, with a head like a bird of prey, whom I delight in. Presently, with no sort of fuss, in came the Emperor. He was in a sort of black mess jacket, with aiguillettes, and looked extraordinarily like a Fifth Form boy. He is very like the Royal Family, but a much cleaner-cut, harder, browner face, and a wonderful "outlook," though his eyes are not as good as his mother's. His walk is splendid—just what you would expect—and the main effect is one of the greatest conceivable quickness of intelligence, and, strange to say, kindness and good manners. I don't know what else to call it, but it is the acme of naturalness and easiness. He said he heard I was doing great things—the usual sort of Royal beginning, only bereft of its *pro forma* delivery for once. When he went on to the next people Gräfin Bülow said I was to be with him exactly as with anyone else—that he liked it ; so I was.

'Dinner was pleasant, only he said such incredibly *borné* stupid, *military* things about Art, to a horrible man, a certain Court Painter, Herr von W——, that I wheeled round and talked to my other neighbour, feeling I should say something too awful if I listened.

'After dinner he came straight up to me, and said he had just had a letter from the Empress Eugénie. We talked of her, of her nobility of character (which it surprised me his knowing about), and he told me much

about the relations between Napoleon III and "Grandpapa" which was news to me. It concerned the founding of the German Empire; how, at a given moment, "Grandpapa," baffled by the want of patriotism on the part of the German Princes, whom he had warned of the Emperor Napoleon's designs, determined to unite Germany himself, and how much ascribed to Bismarck was really due entirely to the old Emperor.

'He said it was a wonderful thing for Germany having had an old, ripe ruler to give the thing shape, and I then could say, with the fullest conviction, that I thought it a capital thing they had a young and go-ahead (I did *not* say unripe!) man to move them on. To which he said, with absolutely winning frankness: "Well, perhaps!" (All this part of the conversation was in English.) He told me that no one in Germany but Bülow had the faintest conception of foreign politics (Sir Frank chaffed me when I told him that I had made that very remark to Bülow himself the day before . . . *and it is true!*). He then went on to complain of our Government, which he thinks the worst of modern times (? I wonder) and of how he tried to do his best to make common interests with us, but was foiled at every turn.

'"I ask Lord Salisbury to help me to get a coaling station, and, my dear Miss Smyth, he laughs at me!" (Here the Emperor whirled round and clapped his thigh.) "Well, what do *I* do? *I take Kiau-Chau!*"

'I then treated him to my theory of the slowness of movement of a great body such as the British Empire, and said that you could as well hurry up a glacier as it; that I was sure our statesmen must feel this and are forced to go the pace of the mass—just as a chorus-leader does. (Privately I thought: Thank goodness we are not a Central European Garrison, like Prussia,

to be wheeled about at the word of command !) And, I said, if the Emperor was talking of inert statesmen might I mention a name forbidden in Germany, Chamberlain ! He struck me by his way of speaking of Chamberlain, evidently full of recognition of the man's *size*, which is an improvement on their previous estimate (I am specially struck with Bülow's altered tone about him by the bye). But he went on to say that all these lives were being sacrificed to "one statesman's ambition" !

'I simply said that was a very unfair way to look at it, (you can say anything to the Emperor) and proceeded to make a slight excursion into history, coming back via Jason, Hawkins and Drake, Clive, Seely, Lord Rosebery, (as promoter of the Imperial Federation idea), Rhodes, and Chamberlain ! ! I also said my say as to whether the war was good or not for the nation, and of the effect on character of going calmly on with your task, without prestige and without *claque*—on the contrary, with every one praying for your downfall. He is splendid to talk that sort of talk to ; he stared and stared, and said : "It is fine what you say, and I daresay you are right." I said : "I *know* I am right ! "—which must have amused him, as I understand it is his own formula !

'Well, we went on to the reorganisation of the English army, for which he has just completed a scheme. When I tell you that by this time I had stood for one and a quarter hours, and that his scheme took quite half an hour more to develop, you will not be surprised to hear that I was almost too leg-weary to retain details of it in my head ; and great distinction though it was to monopolise his eloquence for so long, I felt myself wishing that something would happen to break the thread of his discourse. (Madame de Bülow and every one else sat down after half an hour or so, but the

Emperor remained standing somewhat apart with me.) The main point is, he wishes the Militia to be second line of defence, *eligible for foreign service.*

'Among general things he said which interested me, were, that the Duke of Connaught was a first rate soldier, the King very intelligent about taking up ideas, and that he had "some hopes of being listened to now and then" by him. At one time he said: "I am one of those people who believe that as one would behave in private life, so one must behave in politics"—this with tremendous emphasis and gravity. I can only agree partially with this, inasmuch as . . . but, as Lady Ponsonby would say, "don't let us go into *that, pray* !" And he also told me that the future of the world has its roots in Asia Minor, for which reason a large part of his private fortune is invested there.

'After my interview, which I am told lasted exactly 1¾ hours, the Emperor joined the others, and, thank goodness, sat down at last. The conversation, mainly between him and an architect and Professor Harnack, was about the restoring of Heidelberg Castle, and he talked a fair amount of sense about that. But I was then deep in a really very interesting conversation with Count Bülow, who was explaining that if he had been disagreeable about Chamberlain it was because any friendly word would have put up the back of Germany. I am so much under the charm of Bülow that I actually kept to myself the obvious rejoinder, that if he has now slackened off it is because England showed her teeth and alarmed them !

'While I write comes the news of Methuen's capture, and Germany is of course full of glee. It must be very unpleasant to be English Ambassador here, or indeed anywhere, but on the other hand it is nice to go on looking as if nothing were wrong. Thank you, darling, for your congratulations. It was a stiff

pull, but I always thought it would come right in the end. . . .'

Before launching into comment on this letter, and endeavouring to describe the Emperor's style of tackling political questions, I must just say that, ever since I had been in Berlin the plucky way he never let his infirm arm hamper him had roused my deepest admiration. Sitting next him at dinner, much as one shrank from seeming to watch, it was impossible not to notice the dexterity with which he handled a combined knife and fork, though I cannot remember exactly how it was used. For as the best way to avoid the semblance of doing a thing is not to do it, I kept my eyes well off that plate.

Now to the letter ; and let the reader mark how wise Madame de Bülow did not advise me to be 'absolutely natural' with the Kaiser, till she had gauged what sort of mood he was in and how the first impact with her *protégée* went off !

As regards the 'military' things he said to the Court Painter, I have already told that he considered himself an art expert and have amply inveighed against Berlin sycophancy. Nevertheless, that conversation, from which I carefully abstracted myself by talking to my other neighbour, the highly amused Prince Lichnowsky, was an eye-opener ! I remember that one remark of the Kaiser's was to this effect :

'One man is capable of painting a tree. Good ! (schön). Another can paint a human figure. Better still ! (noch schöner). But the real problem is to combine man and tree on one canvas in an artistic manner.'

Hereupon the Court Painter was too overwhelmed with admiration to address the speaker directly, and confined himself to murmuring, as in an ecstasy, to

the ambient air, 'An amazing pronouncement! The whole function of art in a nut-shell!' Owing no doubt to the matter of the restoration of Heidelberg Castle, besides the architect I spoke of there were other people present whose proclivities were artistic; all these chimed in with adulation, and I felt sorry for the really intelligent man whom the exigencies of the System decreed should thus be made a fool of.

As for the part of the conversation that referred to the designs of Napoleon III, as far as I remember the Kaiser told me that the French Emperor had hinted to 'Grandpapa,' that if he would permit an extension of the Eastern Frontier of France, France would not oppose the Union of the German States in a Federation of which Prussia should be the head. (I do not think the word German Empire was mentioned.) Hereupon 'Grandpapa' informed the other German Princes of the French Emperor's nefarious designs, but found them indifferent to the menace—(possibly because they feared that joint action against him would end in their own subservience to Prussia! but the Kaiser did not touch on that point!). 'Grandpapa' then decided to deal with France himself, and unite Germany on his own lines—all of which is a comment on the notion entertained in France and elsewhere, prior to Bismarck's own revelations as to the Benedetti telegram etc., that the French Sovereigns forced on the Franco-Prussian war for their own reasons.

When the Kaiser referred to the seizing of Kiau-Chau his manner was gorgeously dramatic and fierce, with a touch of child-like exultation, but his references to the Boer War were moderate, and on the whole tactful and sympathetic. I remember saying, which was true at the time, that our young men were too exclusively addicted to sport and rather bored by soldiering; that all this was changing now, that

patriotism was becoming an inspiration to action, and that I hoped the war would not end till the lesson had been fully learned—this last phrase being a bit of bravado, for the Kaiser's remarks on 'the pity of it' had stirred the spirit of opposition.

'Ah,' he said, 'one sees that no one specially dear to you is in the fighting line!'—and my reply was: 'My only brother is.'

When he spoke of the young lives that were being sacrificed, there was a sad, thoughtful look on his face that I have never forgotten; and if I am to be told this was mere acting on his part, all I can say is I don't believe it. Whether or not, during the late war, when thinking of the young German lives sacrificed to the Pan-German ideal, he permitted a similar feeling to betray itself on his face, it certainly must have been in his heart.

IV

I imagine it has been made clear that the worst part of my difficulties came after this first of the two interviews I had with the Kaiser (the other taking place some time after the goal had been reached); and it may be asked how it was possible for the authorities to behave so ill to one who evidently enjoyed favour in high places, and why I did not invoke aid from above?

The answer is that all German institutions are in watertight compartments; and as the Hof Oper was supposed to be as impeccable and to run as smoothly as the Post Office, an appeal to Caesar would have spelt disgrace for Count Hochberg, whom I liked and was sorry for. Besides which it would have opened his master's eyes to unpleasant facts; and to open august eyes is an operation fraught with unpleasantness to the oculist and all his friends—who in this case were people I was beholden to, such as the Bülows and the

Lascelles. Other reasons against such a course were, that, as human being, I wanted to play my own hand; and that as musician, though I knew that in any case the notorious Berlin Press would reserve its direst thunderbolts for my opera, I did not wish them to say it had got on to the boards through Court influence.

Nevertheless, the moment was to come when I all but grasped at what H.B. called *armes de luxe*—that is, at weapons only to be used in direst necessity. It was when an innocent-looking proposal was made by Pierson's substitute to postpone for a couple of days the 'Arrangir-Probe'; that is, the full stage rehearsal, with piano accompaniment, that immediately precedes the first Full Orchestral Rehearsal, when orchestra and stage action combine for the first time. Even as a special train upsets the ordinary service, so this postponement would cut into the opera traffic, and I knew that if it were permitted there could and would be no *Wald* that season.

Then it was that I turned to Sir Frank, of whom, as England's representative, it was more possible to ask aid than of the Bülows. There was not an instant of time to be lost; even before tackling Count Hochberg one must have one's weapon ready to hand; and I always think it a marvellous proof of friendship that, in spite of the extreme delicacy of Sir Frank's position, he lent himself, albeit with comprehensible reluctance, to my schemes. Together we drafted a letter to the Emperor, which, if the abridged sketch of the situation therein contained had been his own unaided effort, would certainly have impressed the All-Highest with our Ambassador's omniscience in all departments, including that of opera management.

Whether Count Hochberg ended by understanding the inner meaning of that projected postponement and was willing to cancel it of his own accord, or whether

it became necessary to mention that I had a terrific stone in my sling, I cannot remember. Anyhow the situation yielded to treatment, the letter, much to Sir Frank's relief, was torn into minute fragments, and, at the date originally fixed, the sun really did rise on a stage and orchestra set in order for the first Full Orchestral Rehearsal of *Der Wald*.

That rehearsal is a dramatic and appalling memory. Muck must have known, more or less, what to expect, but even he was surprised, and gratifyingly horrified, at the exact amount of 'preparation' achieved, few of the singers being note-perfect and the scenic arrangements chaotic! And after all, Muck was morally responsible for this particular opera! Count Hochberg, who by this time was at bay and in a satisfactory but belated state of wrathful zeal, went clambering about among the rafters to see for himself whether I was right in saying that the green lights he had ordered to be repaired a fortnight ago were still jammed; and at one moment his eyeglass came crashing down on to the stage, where its pieces were reverentially swept up by the stage charwoman.

Of the following rehearsals I remember nothing, except that at one crisis I dressed up a sack in a pillow-case (lent me by that same charwoman, who was a great friend of mine) and, swarming up ladders and across beams, hung it up aloft myself, and begged Muck and Hochberg to judge whether, illumined by the now-mended green lights, it did not represent to perfection a shadowy Spirit of the Forest sitting in a tree? . . . but a veil over these details!

When, at last, the evening of the *première* arrived—I think it was April 21st—Count Hochberg said that of course, as composers are wont to do on such occasions, I was to sit in his box, whence there is easy access to

the stage to take your calls. I remarked that there might be none to take! He laughed; 'We produce many operas here,' he said, 'and some of them have been anything but successes, but I can recall no single instance of a composer not being called to the front. It is part of the ritual.'

I have some experience of the Opera public, and throughout that performance, which went better than one could have hoped, I could see that though there had been some hissing when the curtain went up, the audience were interested, attentive, and responsive to my intentions. So musical are the Germans, that even if they wish to, they cannot close their hearts and intelligences to the musical appeal as long as it is sounding in their ears! But in cases such as the Boer War frenzy, the deep, corporate feeling of a people has the final word, and as the last notes were sounding, strong, well-organised hissing and booing broke out in three parts of the house (my friendly baritone told me afterwards who had organised it). The curtain rose once or twice—*pro forma* and in spite of vehement opposition—on the artists, but if the composer had shown herself, which is the last thing she wished to do, there would have been a demonstration—possibly rotten eggs!

Five minutes later I went into the conductor's room. Poor Count Hochberg was in the state of mind you would expect in a Hof Intendant and a gentleman. But Muck was the strangest study. I had always liked his ice-sheathed violence, even when I myself was the sufferer; and now, there he sat at the table, white with rage, his chin resting on his hands:

'I never make a mistake,' he said, 'I know, I feel it in my back when the public is interested . . . and I swear this opera interested them from the first bar.'

No condolences with the composer, but what I appreciated a million times more, the outraged sensibility

of a great musician! And I rather wondered—I still wonder—if he said to himself, that but for his political bias, things might have turned out very differently. For, as I truly wrote home: 'If Mottl, who is not a fanatic, had been first conductor at Berlin, all this could never have happened.'

As I left the Opera House that night, I met a friend of old days, the young Leipzig music-publisher, Max Brockhaus. He was indignant, frantic even, both as musician and friend, at the scene he had witnessed, but mainly preoccupied, as a publisher of operas would be, by the thought of to-morrow's newspapers. 'O these odious Berlin critics!' he exclaimed, 'I have just seen a group of them laughing and sneering and working each other up for the slaughter! . . . My poor friend, prepare yourself!'

But I was already more than prepared, and if next day the Press did indeed put its best foot foremost, this was the part of the whole thing I minded least in what I hope no one imagines is a typical experience. True, the methods employed were ugly, and I do not think that beings like Herr Kraus exist in any other part of the civilised globe; otherwise my poor innocent *Der Wald* was merely an excuse for an anti-Boer-War demonstration—a convenient outlet for feelings I can well understand. I have nothing to gain by flattering Germany; years must elapse ere an English work can be produced there. But I owe too much to a country that loves Opera enough to put it on the rates not to confess, that at times I have said to myself I would rather risk failure there, than score a certain success elsewhere—such is the profound musical culture of this people!

On the morning following the *première* the usual 'Strich Probe' or 'Cut Rehearsal' took place. Few operas are not the better for cutting, and few composers

blind enough not to perceive the fact in the fierce light of a public performance. As regards this rehearsal, alas! even dear Madame de Bülow had rather let me down, by insisting that Muck should conduct the music at some grand entertainment (I think a Bazaar) she was getting up. And although I told her that this would prevent his taking the Strich Probe, I saw that her mind was set, gently but tenaciously, on Muck. As, therefore, the pariah I was could not ask any one else to take the rehearsal, there was nothing for it but to take it myself, though I had never conducted in my life!

With rather a beating heart I walked into the huge Probe Saal, and as soon as I appeared, oh wonder! there was a burst of applause! Orchestras usually say 'good morning' by rattling on their desks, but there was such marked warmth in this particular greeting that I was emboldened to say, as I took up the stick:

'Well, gentlemen, I don't believe *you* think my opera is as bad as all that, in spite of the Press!'

Then came a tribute that redeemed the whole hideous Berlin business. The leader of the second violins, a very grumpy old gentleman as a rule, growled, in accents of scathing contempt: 'Ach! Die Presse!!'; and then, at the back of the room, up rose the Bass Tuba, stout as are most Tuba players, and added, 'Your Opera is simply splendid (*einfach grossartig*) as people will gradually find out, in spite of the Press!'

I may add that they all helped my ignorance and incompetence in every possible way, and that the Strich Probe was got through more or less satisfactorily.

The rest of the adventures of *Der Wald* may be quickly told. All I cared about now was to pull off enough performances in the remnant of season that remained to make it impossible for the Covent Garden

Syndicate to refuse me a London production, in spite of my bad Press.

This was chiefly a point of honour with me, for what composers care about most is the future of their work; and as I have shown elsewhere,[1] there can be no future for a home-grown novelty where Opera is a financial enterprise. Nowadays, as a matter of patriotism and advertisement, our companies will occasionally produce one, *with a guarantee*; but as novelties never pay at once, and as these companies cannot afford to lose money, the new opera is dropped when the bonus is exhausted. The morals of the Minotaur! As many virgins as you please . . . but no lasting relations.

Now a subsidised Opera *can* afford to wait; nor does a bad Press matter much, provided the work be good and the conductor keen enough to push it. For in Germany, if given time, a public will often form its own opinion in the teeth of the critics.

But alas! the season was now too far advanced for a run of *Der Wald* such as might induce other German theatres to take it up when the fury of Anglophobia should have spent itself; besides which, fortified by the Press verdict, the enemy within the gates now reared its head again with admirable audacity. Hochberg would fix a day for the next performance; someone would surreptitiously obtain leave of absence from Pierson's temporary and popularity-hunting substitute; postponement; renewed fixture; and the same thing *da capo*. In fact, it was the usual demoralisation at the fag end of a season, complicated by special malevolence and lack of a strong hand on the reins. Among other agreeable details I recall that my friend Kraus was pleased, at the second performance, to take the love-scene at such railway-speed that I had to re-arrange the score for his pace; which, however, was rather fun—like

[1] 'The Opera Fiasco.'

cutting up an Empire tea-gown (as I wrote home) into a golf costume, adapted to long, quick strides.

Then came the final disaster; it appeared that Muck had long since been promised a fortnight's leave in April . . . and a conductor's leave means remunerative work elsewhere!

Thus, day by day, week by week, my chances dwindled, and by this time poor Count Hochberg's position had become so desperate all round, that I was reluctant to worry him. Nevertheless, a third performance, conducted by the second (or third) conductor, and at which the public began to testify to its interest, had been successfully achieved, and I was busy plotting and counter-plotting for a fourth and final performance, when the second interview with the Kaiser took place.

On May 2nd I was to dine *en famille* with the Bülows at eight o'clock—just a boring female relation of theirs, and five or six men. And as I was going to play golf that afternoon, and as we seldom got back till 7.15, I thought it wise to have my hair done beforehand by a hairdresser, the erections of professionals being as a rule solid, and likely to look better, in spite of the ravages of wind and bunker-thumping, than the hasty improvisations of an amateur. This proved to be nothing short of an inspiration; for when, precisely at 7.15, I re-entered my hotel, I found awaiting me an official letter, confirmed by various telephone messages, saying that dinner was at 7.30, and that I was to come half *décolletée* and in mourning—which I knew meant a Prince of the Blood at least. But it turned out to be the Kaiser himself, who was leaving Berlin that night at 11.45, and wished to come in after dinner and while away the time at the Bülows till his train started!

But for the letter I have ventured to quote, I should have remembered little about the first interview; but

though the account sent home this time was brief, I recall a good deal about the second, probably because *Der Wald* was now off my mind.

'He came straight up to me,' I wrote, 'with "Miss Smyth, I am *delighted* to meet you again!" and was most tremendously cordial. And again he stood talking to me for three-quarters of an hour, when Bülow came up and joined in. The conversation now became German, for Bülow doesn't speak English, and was all about politics and shipping trusts and so forth.

'Presently—I think to prevent my telling the Emperor what I think of Berlin, for the talk was veering in that direction—Bülow manœuvred us most cleverly into chairs among the general group, and then he, the Emperor, Renvers, Madame de Bülow, my beloved old General von Loë, and I, talked . . . but mainly the Emperor and I. He was absolutely delightful and I made him laugh (not a difficult task) till his chair nearly gave way, and this is supposed to be the great thing to do! I'll tell you all about it when we meet, which, O joy! will be in three days' time!'

In a postscript to this letter, addressed to my sister Mary Hunter, (a wonderful portrait of whom, by Sargent, was then on view at the Winter Exhibition in the Museum) I add: 'I amused myself by speaking of Sargent for a second to the Emperor, who loathes all modern painters, and told him there was a very fine Sargent portrait of one of my sisters, in a corner of the town I knew "His Majesty did not think well of" . . . the Secession!! And he actually allowed that he had seen *one* splendid portrait by Sargent! I think it must have been the Chilian Minister.'

When the Chancellor herded us into safety among the other guests the Emperor had just remarked:

'I want to make of Berlin a town like Paris or London—a place towards which every cultivated

European gravitates naturally—not merely the little bürgher capital which it would remain if most of its inhabitants had their way!' (Indeed one of his ordinances had been that, in the stalls and dress-circle, ladies were to be 'ausgeschitten,' that is, show their necks; and on the night after this edict—which escaped the notice of several theatre-goers—was published, wonderful scenes were enacted in the ladies garderobe, gold-braided officials in cocked hats producing pins, and deciding whether a stuff gown turned in in a V would, or would not, satisfy requirements.)

'Can you tell me why more *English* do not spend the winter here?' the Kaiser went on . . . and Bülow no doubt saw the moment coming when I should say to his master what I had often said to him, that nothing would induce English people to pass months in a Barrack, under military discipline!

Another dangerous moment was already behind us; it was when the Emperor had said, immediately after shaking hands with me—and as one certain what the reply will be—that he hoped all had gone smoothly for me 'at my Opera House.' After a moment's hesitation, during which Madame de Bülow began to look anxious, I said that Pierson's death had been an unfortunate circumstance, explained a little, and wound up by remarking that if the coachman dies on the box, of course the horses are all over the place for a moment.

'That should not be so,' said the Kaiser with a touch of his photographic face—a very different expression to the charming, friendly one it wore in private life. 'If one of my Generals falls down dead on parade, his place is instantly taken by another, and everything goes on as before!'

To this I replied, as politely as I knew how . . . but as I spoke my hostess's cheek paled visibly: 'Unfortunately it is not like that in the world of Opera!'

Great must have been her relief when the Kaiser burst out laughing, and turning round to her, said: 'Do you hear what she says? That my Opera is a pigsty!' (*Schweinestall*).

In fact, though without a *cornet-à-piston* to carry off the part, I had evidently slipped into Baroness L's privileged cap and bells for the time being.

In the course of my duett with the Kaiser, which became a trio when Bülow joined us, a previously formed impression deepened, namely, that but for his inconceivable vanity,—nourished perpetually by gross, blatant flattery such as no class of English people would indulge in,—the Kaiser would have been one of the most remarkable of men. I was too unversed in political history to judge of his ruling weakness, instability, but again and again I was struck by his natural parts—his earnestness, his imaginativeness, the boldness of his spirit, the quickness of his brain, the picturesque yet incisive language he used, whether speaking English or German. And it was impossible, too, not to believe he was a *good* man.

Then, suddenly, would come a moment when you realised that a mist of vanity would always hang between him and the truth. For instance, he spoke luminously and profoundly about the future of South Africa, of the contest between the white man and the black, and paid a magnificent tribute to Rhodes, incidentally giving a *résumé* of their interview that differed amusingly from an account given me previously by Sir Frank, who had been present part of the time. Then came the finishing touch:

'Do you know what Rhodes said to me?' he remarked, and his eye gleamed. 'He said, "Ah, Sir, if you and I had met ten years ago we would have remodelled the world between us!"'

Of course Rhodes may well have said something

of the sort, in jocular hyperbole, but he surely cannot have meant, as I feel certain the Kaiser took him to mean, that had they met sooner, Rhodes would have been willing to put his services at the disposal of Germany rather than England—as did the renegade, Houston Chamberlain !

Again, he told me how, when Ladysmith was invested, he had bidden his Head Quarters Staff draw up the precise scheme they would adopt in our place, and had forwarded the result to 'Grandmama' (Queen Victoria), all of which proved to be true in every detail. But then he spoiled all by saying that he himself had written to his old friend, Lord Roberts, recommending him to go round and attack Kimberley.

'And, my dear Miss Smyth' (his invariable formula in addressing English people, and evidently a point of courtesy with him), 'the next thing was a telegram from Roberts saying that he meant to pursue the course I advised !'

Possibly this anecdote was merely intended to show that his own strategical knowledge was on a par with that of Lord Roberts—an implication which would have come more gracefully from someone else; but, incredible as it seems, my impression is, that the young, untried warrior really believed that if the veteran Lord Roberts made the Kimberley move, it was thanks to his advice !

I may add that the above was one among many instances cited by him to prove that he neglected no opportunity of showing good will towards England; notwithstanding which fact the inimicality of our Government, against which he raged as before, but if possible more vehemently, remained invincible, he said.

In my hasty scrawl home there is no mention of the part of the interview which struck me most, but I spoke about it to Sir Frank at the time, and since then to many others ; namely, the strange ignorance of the

spirit of England displayed by Bülow, and, tacitly, by the Emperor. I cannot now recall what point was being discussed, but the Chancellor was propounding some eventuality, either political or industrial. 'We shall do so and so,' he said, 'and of course England's attitude will be thus and thus. *I* should reply in such and such a fashion, and it is easy to say what your Cabinet would then do. . . .' And so he went on, crediting England with states of mind, forecasting English lines of argument, which I should have thought the barest knowledge of Mrs. Markham's 'History of England,' the most shadowy acquaintance with English Political History, would have shown him were not only improbable but inconceivable.

As I listened, it is no exaggeration to say I could hardly believe my ears. And there was the Kaiser, who surely knew England, standing in a familiar attitude—his left hand on his sword-hilt, his right on his hip—listening in high approval, with a mildly ferocious expression of countenance, to this fantastic horoscope! And occasionally he would nod his head sharply, slap his thigh, and ejaculate: 'Exactly! . . . Very true!'

At last I so far forgot myself as to wheel round and say: 'But the Chancellor knows *nothing whatever* about England!' And as I spoke, my hand came down with some energy on a table which had been affording intermittent and blessed support during the last forty minutes—for the Kaiser never sat down if he could help it. Whereupon he, who was evidently in a beaming humour, said to the Chancellor, giving at the same time an excellent imitation of my slap on the table:

'You hear what she says, Bernhard? That you know *nothing whatever* about England!' and then he added, turning to me: 'but you know the poor fellow has never been there!'

Now the Chancellor was a man of big ideas—a really remarkable personality, bold, strong, astute, intelligent, with greatest suppleness of mind, and not devoid of imagination ; a polished man of the world, and in every way equipped, one would have said, for a big position. And yet any one of average intelligence who knew England would have perceived that the statesman responsible for the Foreign Policy of Germany knew absolutely nothing about the English ! But as Hermann Bahr, the Austrian playwright, journalist, and thinker, remarks in his War-Diary, the Germans are constructive idealists (which, I think, is the secret of their musical genius) and incapable of perceiving reality. And among the realities hidden from them is the psychology of other nations.

After the Emperor's departure Madame de Bülow and I commented on his charm, how easy he was to get on with, how natural, gay, and *bon enfant*. She also said : 'You must allow that Bernhard, at least, doesn't flatter him !' and I replied, as truth compelled, that if he did, it was so delicately and *gentlemanly* done, that no one would like to give it such an ugly name. She confessed to successive spasms of alarm and relief in the matter of 'my Opera House,' and was satisfied with my contribution to the gaiety of the evening. And next morning, Lady Edward Cavendish, who was celebrated for delivering shrewd little digs, with a pensive expression and sideways droop of the head that gave them inimitable point, remarked :

'I hear you were a great success, and that the Emperor spent the whole evening laughing with you . . . or at you !'

. . . . . .

There is little to add to this story of an eventful Berlin winter, unless to record the fact that the fourth

performance of *Der Wald*, which took place on May 9th (Muck still being absent on leave), was far and away the best, strange to say; and this time the audience undisguisedly showed its approval. Heartrending reflection! for now it was too late! True, Count Hochberg had faithfully promised a fifth performance (to complete the number stipulated for in my contract) but . . . he had also given my friend Krauss leave till June 7th! I had written home that 'to put this sort of thing through requires iron health and maniac persistence,' but to hang about in Berlin for another four weeks was more than I could face. So on the 10th May I packed up my scores and started for England, where, to this day, the *Wald* performances have achieved the noble number of . . . three!

Strange to say I never saw dear Madame de Bülow again, though I and Donna Laura met once or twice afterwards in Italy. By that time she had grown much attached to Bülow, who, when last I saw her, was at the apex of his favour with the Kaiser, had been made Prince, and eventually bought the beautiful Villa di Malta at Rome. The Naval Power of Germany was growing apace and it became more and more necessary to see to the Italian joint in the Triple Alliance, for which delicate task no one was better equipped than Prince Bülow. And Donna Laura was far too much of a woman of the world not to mould herself to the situation, and prune her sympathies, as no doubt she did, in the direction of Germany.

I was not fated to meet her in the eight years that lay between my last visit to Rome and the outbreak of the war, but there is one incident I must record, for it always amused me greatly.

In my conversations with the Empress Eugénie I had always gathered that, in the days of the Empire,

she and the brilliant Princess Camporeale did not hit it off. Donna Laura would scoff when I spoke of the Empress's originality and brain power; and when I raved about Donna Laura and enquired whether she had not been most beautiful in her youth, I was assured that she had been merely 'striking,' and generally given to understand that in those days the Empress far from approved of my Italian divinity. The year before the war, however, travelling in Italy, the Empress paid a visit to Donna Laura at her villa outside Bologna . . . and if ever two old ladies, who had parted half a century ago in something very like mutual antipathy, fell head over ears in love with each other, it happened on that occasion!

Then came the war, and afterwards, when Italy joined the Allies, I often thought with a pang of the mother and daughter who loved and admired each other so profoundly. The die once cast, Donna Laura is reported to have said—and it would be like her: 'Now I am not Bülow's mother-in-law but Minghetti's widow!' I believe they met occasionally in Switzerland—it would take more than a European war to prevent Donna Laura seeing her daughter if she had a mind to! But when she died in 1916 it appears that poor Madame de Bülow arrived too late. I wrote to her, writing all the more warmly because of the gulf that lay between us—of my deep affection for her mother, my grief at her death, and of the feelings I cherished—and still cherish—for my correspondent. I very much doubt if the letter ever reached her; anyhow, it was not answered, and since Germany lost the war I have not dared to write again.

The Kaiser I only saw once afterwards. I was staying in Rome when he passed through on a two days' visit, and by an extraordinary bit of luck I was

bicycling in the Campagna, when I saw a carriage approaching at break-neck speed, preceded by the well-known Imperial outriders. Hauling my machine on to a hillock at the side of the road, I stood there, and as the carriage passed made a profound curtsey, without the bicycle collapsing on top of me—no mean feat. The Kaiser made a formal acknowledgment, then stared, whirled round in his seat, half stood up, and waved his hand in the friendly fashion that had so utterly overwhelmed the high-born English lady in Berlin a few years ago.

And needless to say, I was as deeply flattered and gratified as would be ninety-nine out of a hundred readers of these pages if it had happened to them !

DRISHANE. *September* 1920.

THE OPERA FIASCO

I

I CANNOT imagine that any sane person would be tempted to ring changes on that old ancient theme, 'Opera in England,' unless in the hope of serving some useful purpose. Mine is to throw a shaft of light on an obscure point, namely, the exact situation of the English opera composer. And if this involves discussion of the whole subject of Opera, I can at least claim to have been up to the neck in it for the greater part of my life, and to have seen things, not from the Olympian point of view of the opera promoter, but from that of one in the arena.

The chief fact to face is, that whereas Italy, France, Germany, and Russia have distinctive schools of their own, and mutually perform each other's work, England is, operatically speaking, non-existent. What I wish to demonstrate is the existence of certain circumstances—solid, inexorable, but apparently invisible to those who expound these matters in the Press—which practically forbid the materialisation of a school of British operatic writers.

This, I confess, is the part of the subject that interests me most; not from personal reasons, as I hope the absence of bias in my remarks will show, but because the true strength of a country lies in its productive power. As long as our musical output is negligible in the eyes of the world it is no use claiming to be a musical people.

When people point to the amount of operatic and other music raging through these isles, and ask if we are not getting on famously, I often think of some fantastic planet, such as Swift might have described, or even Charles Kingsley—a planet peopled entirely by bachelors and spinsters, who believe that by adopting children tossed over to them from neighbouring planets they prove themselves to be a productive community, strong in family instinct.

If I did not believe that means exist for stimulating the musical prolificness which once was a characteristic of our race, it would be useless writing articles. But since I do believe it, and know that most of these means are left out of count altogether, it is worth while showing how the present situation reacts on workers in the field of art I know best. And possibly in clearing one bit of ground a way out of the thicket may suggest itself.

Not long ago I read an article in the *Manchester Guardian*, written by that intelligent and cultivated man Mr. Ernest Newman—a study of the deplorable and unhealthy state of music in England. Among other things, he asks himself why there is no school of British opera composers—answering his question more or less to his own satisfaction, as we all do in similar cases.

Here are three of his remarks, between which a portentous interconnection may be discerned by the thoughtful reader : (1) 'How can we account for the smallness of audiences ?' (2) 'It is difficult to get people to go and hear new works.' (3) '*Why cannot an Englishman write an opera that is a success ?*'

This last conundrum I hope to solve *ambulando*. At present I will only say that neither in this article—full of gentle lamentations on the subject of British incapacity—nor in many similar ones I have come

across is there any reference to the hopeless circumstances in which such lunatics as attempt to achieve something in their own country find themselves placed.

Has anyone ever asked himself how the breed of horses would fare if racing were not a national passion? The German Government realised it, and did what I believe was never necessary in this country—subsidised racing. Now Opera, as, alas! it is only too easy to prove, is *not* among our national passions, yet composers are for ever being challenged to produce a Derby winner.

Have our challengers never thought the matter out, or is it that essentials are sometimes too dry and commonplace to lend themselves to journalistic treatment? Of course, too, it is an easy and popular thing to say to the public: 'I assure you it is wholly the musicians' fault, not yours and mine, if things are thus and thus,' whereas to make people face unpleasant facts which no one but themselves can remedy is a less grateful task.

In any case it is the business of the accused to draw up his own defence. This, in all friendliness, is what I shall attempt to do—not by skimming over the sore place with collodion, but by probing it to the core.

II

An operatic enterprise is one of two things. Either, as on the Continent, it is subsidised and permanent—an institution for which the public is willing to make a small financial sacrifice, realising (as we do in England in matters like drainage and water supply) that certain vital issues should be put on a solid, reliable basis; or else it is a financial speculation like the old Covent Garden Syndicate and other companies, which, though making an occasional concession to English produc-

tions, mount such works as pay—in other words, old favourites.

Later on came Sir Thomas Beecham,[1] who gave us a third thing, and a delightful one, the only trouble being that it was hailed for something it was not. At present I will only say that his enterprises have not differed from others in the essential characteristics of living in short spasms and habitually going on tour, thus lacking the element of stability whereby opera can become a serious factor in the settling and development of taste.

It is no one's and everyone's fault that things are thus. If opera were a real need in English life, not only would every large town have its rate-fed Opera House, but round these houses a complex of industrial activities would have sprung up, proving that our æsthetic desires had struck sound business roots—one of the great tests of reality.

It is about this business-complex, which for convenience I will call 'the Machine,' and the effect of its presence or absence on the upspringing of a race of opera-writers, that I wish to speak first. If in so doing you feel as might one who is explaining that you cannot play lawn tennis without racquets, balls, and a net, I can only plead that some such exposition appears to be necessary.

It is easy to maintain that genius will make its way, but much depends on whether the means exist for bringing its output before the world. What could the Renaissance painters have achieved had there been no churches clamouring for altar-pieces, no art patrons anxious to see themselves immortalised? And where would painters be nowadays without exhibitions and picture dealers? In the same way, but for publishers

[1] This article was written before the retirement—which one hopes is only temporary—of Sir Thomas from the opera arena.

would not even 'The Scarlet Pimpernel' have bloomed in vain?

To put the matter inversely, I doubt not that abroad there are many foreigners capable of kicking a football or hitting a cricket ball with energy and precision; but inasmuch as these two games are practically non-existent on the continent, our laurels are not yet in jeopardy. You are unlikely to raise even a handful of brilliant performers under such circumstances.

It is the general level that counts. Mt. Blanc and Mt. Everest do not spring out of flat plains, but are the crowns of high-lying regions. And the complex of public interest, middlemen, and other conditions that I call the Machine is the outward and visible sign of a living inward need.

The Machine is not a thing you can vamp up in a year or two. It grows up gradually, in response to an imperative demand, and among other items includes in this particular case a vast army of skilled copyists, publishers, abundance of schools for the exclusive training of dramatic singers, and several subsidised opera houses.

Finally, to insist once more on the chief point, all this paraphernalia argues the existence of a keen, critical, curious, and hungry public.

It is for the musical historian to treat of the inception and development of the Machine. My task is to show:—

(1) That no one depends more absolutely than the musician on this factor, the very presence and functions of which elsewhere seem, as we see, to have escaped the notice of commentators.

(2) That without it, the operatic composer, especially the beginner, may as well put up his shutters.

(3) To bring home the significant fact *that nothing of the sort exists in England.*

III

Let me endeavour to show how the Machine works.

A reading public, such as there has always been in Great Britain, insists on the constant issue of new books; similarly a really musical community is an inquisitive community, and every Opera House is expected to bring out new works every season ; indeed, this is implicit in the subsidy contract. Some few of them in the old days enjoyed a royal grant. To the rest, big and small, an income is guaranteed by the municipality such as will enable the director, who is elected for a term of years, to show sport and also earn a livelihood.

Now, as there are over a hundred Opera Houses in Germany and Austria, it follows that there is also a vast crop of musical firms for ever on the look-out for talent. The merest neophyte who has the good word of a good judge has a fair chance of finding a publisher. For instead of being, as he is here, a waif and stray—Japhet in search of a Father—he is one bringing grist to a busy mill. And though a pig in a poke is a mathematical certainty compared to an operatic novelty, the publisher is running no great risk, for his business, like that of the Opera Houses he serves, is built up on lines that allow a margin for failures. And a real success is a gold mine both to him and the composer.

Many are the resources commanded by an enterprising firm in a country that insists on having opera all the year round. Perhaps it holds rights in a classic, or in some new work that failed at first but for which its prescience divined a future ; and such rights it will cede on easy terms in exchange for a promise to produce certain of its later acquisitions. Herein lies the explanation of a phenomenon that surprises many Innocents Abroad—how it comes about that many

an impossible *opus* will travel half round Europe before finally expiring of its own dullness.

On the other hand, suppose some really good work falls flat at first, it has many chances of showing its true quality. Indeed, to score a success with a thing that has failed elsewhere is a matter of emulation. 'Breslau did nothing with it,' a director will say, 'nor Mannheim its real career began with us!' These things being so, there is nothing miraculous or wildly gratifying about a fact mentioned elsewhere; that contracts made in 1914 by my publisher for two of my operas included a minimum of three performances at the two theatres in question *and for several in other towns.*

During this time, but for the war, these two works, even if fated to disappear eventually below the horizon, would have had a fair chance; and both composer and publisher would have been earning money.

Now, consider what all this means to one who has yet a name to make—consider it from the point of view of mental wear and tear alone! From first to last the publisher is pushing your interests, seeing to every appalling technical detail opera production involves—whether as to the material, or general wrestlings with the authorities—interviewing, advertising, collecting your fees, and so on.

In fact, the whole thing is a matter of business between people who desire, not only for æsthetic reasons, that the venture shall succeed. No heart-breaking and capricious postponements, no maltreated scores, no mislaid or ruined vocal and orchestral parts, no evading on the part of the director of his obligations! In a word Heaven, because real business! A queer definition, perhaps, but a true one.

To sum up, the Machine performs two offices necessary to the opera-composer's salvation; (1) it publishes your work; (2) it tides it over the critical period when

its fate is trembling in the balance and needs watching. Of course, there have been instantaneous successes, but in the case of an unknown composer these occur once in a blue moon. The great Viennese director, Gustav Mahler, who had studied the subject with the passion and thoroughness peculiar to him, has said that among operas that had come to stay, perhaps one in ten could have dispensed with nursery attentions. And a well-known Berlin publisher once told me that only 5 per cent. of the operas actually produced live.

If, therefore, there were no machinery for the safeguarding of promising fledglings, better stifle the whole brood at its birth and have done with it !

IV

I will now try to show what are the odds against a new opera in a country where, the Machine being non-existent, that sensitive plant begins life with its roots in the air.

Let us run through our assets. There is the old Syndicate, recently come to life again, its honest, dividend-hunting countenance shyly hiding in the folds of Sir Thomas Beecham's artistic mantle. Clasped in loving embrace, one cannot help wondering which will squeeze the other to death in the long run.

Further, we have Sir Thomas *minus* his partner—a big-hearted man who is willing to lose some £25,000 a year, not on the racecourse, or at *rouge-et-noir*, but over intermittent seasons in London and the provinces. Further, there is the Carl Rosa Company, and opera is played at the Surrey, the Old Vic, and elsewhere. All of which activity is supposed to prove that a genuine love of opera exists in England.

Well, if this be love indeed, I am inclined to demand the traditional acid-test of serious intentions. If you

will not take opera to your bosom for better and for worse, I don't think much of your passion. Anyhow, the tragic fact remains that there is in all England no permanent Opera House—*and as a natural consequence not one single opera publishing firm.*

I daresay that here and there an opera may have been printed in London. A most sporting editor once offered to publish my 'Wreckers,' but luckily for us both the bargain was not consummated. For how could he have pushed it? Where could he have pushed it to, unless into the cupboard? With whom could he have done business?

As a matter of fact there is, there can be, no business under our system. What fees can you ask or expect? How collect them? What possibilities of a future has a new English opera in England? For the matter of that, what present?

At this point I should like to quote yet another remark of Mr. Newman's, made in reply to a letter of mine that appeared in *The Times*, in which I described what befalls an opera pronounced by Producers, Press, and Public to have been 'a great success.' 'I should be surprised to hear,' he said, 'that Sir Thomas Beecham would be foolish enough to keep an opera out of the bill *that was sure of filling the house.*'

The obvious rejoinder is to ask how many brand-new operas *are* sure of filling the house? Or to point out that some which are sure *not* to fill it have been given again and again. The 'Coq d'Or,' for instance, or 'The Fair Maid of Perth.' And pray why not? Shall not the man who pays the piper call the tune that pleases him?

There are, however, purely technical reasons, matters of scenery, cast, length, etc., which explain to those who know the ropes why one work happens to fit in with other items in a short and crowded season, whereas

another does not. Apart from which it will be easy to show that even a successful British work must be, and is, an unmitigated nuisance to the management.

A British opera is produced partly by favour, partly in response to a theoretical demand for native work. Ripe or not ripe for production—and a journey in Central Africa is not more fraught with accidents and miscalculations than this particular venture—it has to come out on the appointed date. For the supreme virtue in commercial enterprise is 'to keep faith with the public.' . . . There was once a 'Wreckers' performance in London, during the dress rehearsal of which the heroine was still singing from her notes!

English companies are small, and to launch a novelty you want the pick of the troupe. But in a brief scheme, drawn up with the rigidity of a holiday-traffic railway-advertisement, these are perforce mortgaged up to the hilt in the interests of the Old Favourites, on which the success of the season hinges. Further, the seasons being uncertain and spasmodic, the singers depend mainly on concert engagements for a livelihood, a fact that Mr. Vincent Crummles has to take into consideration if he wishes to keep them fit. And to create a new part is always a great strain.

How all this reacts on the mounting of novelties, even in London, need not be pointed out.

The miracle having nevertheless been accomplished, weeks may elapse before the second performance takes place. Now modern music, if worth anything, is novel in idea and technique. But there is no full rehearsal. The hard-worked singers have forgotten their 'business'—in some cases their notes—and the orchestra is practically reading at sight. Result, a triumph of presence of mind in which I know not whom to admire most—conductor or executants; in short, a scandalous scramble.

Think of boots, worn now and again, at intervals, but never re-polished! Small wonder if the new opera, which perhaps delighted all at first, is presently found to be not wholly satisfactory. But whereas abroad a trained Press and public know when an innocent is being massacred, here no one seems to know—or care.

V

Let us suppose that, nuisance or no nuisance, the new opera has been presented to the London world, had two or perhaps three performances there, *plus* a promise—alas! for promises in financially conducted enterprise!—to 'put it on the repertory.'

But first a word as to this initial production. Except in the case of Sir Thomas Beecham—a man able and willing to make sacrifices for new ventures on a scale of unexampled generosity—the composer is obliged to guarantee a certain sum to the producer, who, given the cost of the many rehearsals necessary in the case of novelties, stands otherwise to lose some hundreds of pounds. Why this fact, of which the managers make no secret, is hushed up by the Press, I cannot conceive.

What next? The company goes on tour, and in the provinces every difficulty I have enumerated is ten times greater, because the opera-spasm is shorter and the dovetailing of events a still more complex problem. Can one wonder if some leading lady, who has but three chances of securing the frenzied plaudits of the house in certain favourite rôles, such as *Isolde* or *Madam Butterfly*, is averse to sacrificing one of these in the interests of what she knows to be a 'passing show'? Who shall blame her? Certainly not I.

And in the provinces a new difficulty presents itself. Modern works depend a good deal on orchestration, but on tour the orchestra plays with maimed rites, being

but a skeleton crew reinforced with local talent. Now the Old Favourite, a hardy perennial, can survive a good deal ; but a couple of violas *versus* four trombones is *not* favourable to the delicate operation of getting a new work across the footlights.

These are some of the domestic difficulties—the sort of thing the public cannot know—that dog the footsteps of a new work. Not one of them exists in countries where opera is on a permanent basis, where the companies are large (including, perhaps, three equally gifted and competent 'dramatic sopranos'), and where, instead of a cut and dried scheme 42 items long, you have an elastic forecast for a few days only, and nine months of open season before you.

Thus, if a new opera be a success, it can be produced again and again at convenient intervals ; if it is a half-night's piece, with some new stable-companion later on. Thus you insidiously lure Mr. Z., who has heard the novelty once, to hear it again. All of which takes contrivance and goodwill but is also a matter of business to the director, who possibly is bound by contract, on the principle I spoke of, to work off a certain number of performances. Meanwhile the novelty is 'catching on.'

And I may add that if, all the world over, singers have a predilection for their old rôles, the creation of absolutely new ones, in genuine *premières* where there is no model to go by, is worth their while. For are not three powerful directors sitting in the stalls, having hied hither to hear the novelty? Quite a different thing, this, to spending your nerve-tissue in flogging a dead horse.

Yes, a dead horse, because, truth to tell, nine out of ten of our opera goers don't want novelties. As I said before, the test of cultured taste is curiosity ; but financially-run opera bases on and flatters the dressing-

gown-and-slippers frame of mind bred of ignorance and stagnation. 'Butterfly' will fill the house night after night for certain, but in two or three nights you will have got through the handful of bold spirits capable of working up a passing fit of curiosity. The others would remain indifferent even though an angel were to proclaim from the top of St. Paul's that in ten years' time that new work would be the greatest financial success (I am putting it strongly) of the twentieth century!

Now though the munificence of Sir Thomas is a byword, this basic fact cannot be ignored even by his management. As for other companies, I can only admire their public spiritedness in ever mounting new works at all. To do so involves an unspeakable amount of trouble. A couple of performances or so will hardly cover expenses—the bonus cannot pay for sufficient rehearsal, let alone make good a possible deficit. And yet, knowing all this, everyone applies himself to the task as if there were a fortune in it!

Wonderful! Admirable! *C'est magnifique—mais ce n'est pas l'art!*

VI

There is only one way to build up enduring success for a new opera; make it the first consideration; rehearse, regardless of dates, till it is perfect; then launch it, and keep it going with friendly kicks, like a motor-bicycle, till it has acquired its own momentum. This has never been, and can never be, done under our system.

My reply, then, to M. Newman is: firstly, that it is impossible to give a new work again and again; and, secondly, that in no case would it be worth the resultant confusion, since no one would say thank you. Nor can other companies take it up, because there is

only one score and set of parts—MS., of course—in a word, no Machine. (Think of Dr. Vaughan Williams, who lost the only score of one of his finest works, whereupon the disgraceful fact came out that it had never found a publisher !)

To sum up, an English opera has not a dog's chance. Nor has a critic, unless he be a man of fabulous intuition, imagination, *and experience*, an opportunity of forming an opinion worth pronouncing on such works as have painfully struggled up to the light of day—since immediately after the *première* the thing falls to pieces.

Meanwhile, good-bye to the illusion that opera is a living issue in England. For living things put forth shoots, but under these conditions the upspringing of a native school is an impossibility. So it will remain till we class opera with public pleasure grounds (including the ducks in St. James's Park) as a luxury that a civilised community demands, that cannot pay its way, and must be subsidised.

The alternative is for the British composer to try his luck abroad. I have spent many years doing it, and on the whole have fared well. English musicians do not rank high on the Continent ; the guild of operatic composers is a jealous one, and it was trebly difficult for a woman to force the door. On the other hand, once you had done it all was plain sailing, for the foreign critic is free from the no doubt flattering preoccupation with sex that besets his English colleague. None of those eternal allusions to 'one of the foremost women composers,' which so delightfully discount encomium, safeguard male susceptibility, and betoken a *naïveté* of spirit to which neither French nor German critics can aspire !

(Perhaps the latter are too familiar with a certain well-known German story—'I am third in my class,

papa.' 'Well done, my boy, and how many are there in your class?' 'Three, papa'—to indulge in this particular brand of compliment. Or perhaps they think it sounder to judge a composition on its own merits, more especially since the public cares nothing about your sex—only about the quality of your work.)

'I like abroad,' therefore, as an Irish lady once said. But how many young people—and it is of these I am thinking—have time or money to spend in chasing one director after another over all Europe, till you find one sufficiently keen on your opera to do the unpopular thing of producing it?

Then comes the publisher question, much complicated by the fact that you have written to English words. And if readers will reflect on English translations of foreign texts which have been inflicted on them—even in the case of masterpieces on which the frenzied efforts of poets have been concentrated for years—they will gather that to turn out a translation which shall read, sing, and declaim well is an almost impossible achievement.

I have only met one individual who was musician and poet enough to do it, and I believe he never finished a whole opera, being invariably overcome with *delirium tremens* (as happened when he was working for me) before the Third Act was reached. None but a human derelict would undertake such a thankless task.

But if, in the end, with everything against him, an English composer does succeed in getting his work played, he has at least some chance of seeing it fairly launched on a living stream. For on the Continent opera really is a living stream, whereas here it is, so to speak, a succession of isolated puddles. Some of them glittering ones, but . . . puddles for all that, and liable to dry up untimely.

Unless circumstances alter, unpatriotic as it may

seem, I should therefore advise the young opera composer to shape his course for the foreign market, where good work has a future.

VII

One word on a subject about which the general public knows but little, and which is pertinent to this inquiry. How comes it that even abroad, where everything is in its favour, the launching of a new opera is such a ticklish venture, its reception almost impossible to forecast? It is far too intricate a question to thrash out thoroughly, but here are one or two elements that make for uncertainty.

Where you have 300 people involved in an enterprise, a good deal depends on luck. A chance draught may necessitate a substitute for the singer who carries the piece, or even cause postponement till the best part of the season (October to April) is over. Now the whole committee of the Royal Academy, and half the staffs of all the publishing houses in London, might be down with influenza without imperilling the fate of a picture or a book.

Again, the house may be out of tune on the night of the *première*. Account for it as you will, every opera director is acquainted with this factor—and also with its reaction on the performers, than whom there is no more nervous class of beings. Or perhaps that opera's hour may not have struck; the world is not ready for it yet.

One of the most astonishing things in the history of painting is to read of some innovation introduced by such and such a painter, which at the time caused his art to be condemned as unnatural, hideous, or what not. Viewed at the distance of 400 years, it is hard for any but an expert to perceive any great difference between

his method and that of his contemporaries. But that imperceptible difference estranged his generation.

So it is with music—a much harder thing to make friends with than pictures or books, for it will not stand still to be stared at or re-read. On no other hypothesis can we account for the fact so strangely ignored by those who bid us prove our worth by scoring an instantaneous success, that operas like 'Carmen,' 'Faust,' 'The Barber of Seville,' and even some of Verdi's most famous creations, began by falling flat. I myself was in Germany when 'Hoffmann's Tales,' howled off the stage during the composer's lifetime and immured ever since his death, was triumphantly brought back to the light of day by a conductor of genius—never to leave it again. Melodious, fantastic, easy to grasp as it seems to us now, it was a new departure—and for that reason unacceptable.

The truth is, we are all peasants at heart and loathe new departures, though very few of us are sufficiently intelligent and humble-minded to allow it. And the spot on earth where a new departure has least chance of making its way—in opera, at least—is England.

Before leaving this part of the subject I should like to speak of the only genuine success scored on the English operatic stage during my lifetime—Gilbert and Sullivan.

Here is a case not likely to occur again, the coming together of two collaborators of genius. Neither did great things by himself, but together they have worked, I believe, for all time. I told elsewhere [1] how a shade passed over Sir Arthur's face when I could not share his opinion that 'The Golden Legend' is his best work. I now think it was perhaps that he would have wished his masterpiece to be in the main a musical triumph; for no one knew better than he that in opera the libretto is at least as great a factor as the music.

[1] *Impressions that Remained.* (Longmans.)

The story of the Gilbert-Sullivan combine, however, does not affect the question of Grand Opera, which was once thus stated in a letter to me by Mr. Delius, whom I am certain it is not indiscreet to quote, since he is not one who keeps straight talk for private life. 'The position,' he writes, 'seems very simple to me. (1) Opera cannot be run anywhere on an artistic basis without a subsidy ; (2) It cannot be run on a commercial basis without degenerating.'

Remains the question : What is to be done ? And the answer hinges on the existence or absence in English hearts of a genuine love of opera. With all humility I will give my impressions on this subject for what they are worth in the concluding part of these reflections.

VIII

Whether we are, or are not, a music-loving race, one thing is certain—and I am grateful to Mr. Newman for blurting out the unpleasant truth—music is in a very unhealthy state in England. Anyone who glances at the exhibits in the music-shop window of any country town can judge of the stuff turned out by the Machine for the consumption of the lyrically minded. In fact, I should think the level of musical taste here is as low as anywhere in the world. And another melancholy fact is that good music does not pay.

I believe it is an economic truth that if demand be great, supply is cheap and plentiful. Certainly the class of people who throng concert rooms and Opera Houses in Germany and Austria prove the contention ; for though the standard of performance is higher there than anywhere, *which always implies unlimited rehearsal*, the seats are low-priced. And yet music is a paying concern !

In London, whether because, music not being a

genuine need, the musical unions are able to demand uneconomic wages, or for some other reason, it is only by pestering right and left for guarantees, and contriving somehow to fill the expensive seats, that concerts are able to drag out a precarious existence.

As for opera, its finance roots in the boxes and stalls ; and the result is, that in spite of Sir Thomas Beecham's high aspirations and unexampled munificence, it is, as it always has been, partly a business speculation, partly a social function.

Shades of Mahler and Schuch ! Your Opera Houses were noble piles frequented by the great world, a social focus, even an *appanage* of the Court. But what if your plans had been indirectly settled by Society, your destinies swayed by a class that thinks of nothing but amusing itself, that is more superficial, less patient of sound investments and slow returns (which is the Gospel of Art) than any other class ! In short, a crowd past praying for, artistically speaking, all the world over ; and nowhere, unless perhaps in New York, more musically ignorant, and consequently more absurd in its easy assumption of a right to pontificate, than in London !

I think there is more of the spirit of sham abroad in our opera world than in the unregenerate days of commercialism pure and simple. For one thing, in that pre-war epoch whole German companies were imported—people with a traditional respect for music, led by men like Richter and Mottl who would no more have tolerated interference than they would have forgone their lager beer after the performance.

Then as now money was needed. But whereas in these later times duchesses have been bidden, tiaras and all, to attend high-priced balls in order to start a fund for the production of works by native composers, in the old days the methods of raising the wind, if crude, were sounder and infinitely more amusing.

I remember a grave young Nonconformist engaged in some capacity behind the scenes telling me, that at one of these money-raising balls he had met a gentleman with three diamond shirt studs cantering down a corridor—on his shoulders a lady who apparently held with Norah Creena that 'nature's dress is loveliness.' He intended to report this astounding incident to the authorities, and in spite of my earnest entreaties may have done so. Anyhow his services were dispensed with shortly afterwards.

Again, we outsiders were regaled with lurid legends of Countesses flying to the box-office when all was over, and with bejewelled fingers sorting and counting up piles of sovereigns. There was a frankness about all this that rather appealed to me. It is the combination of these realities with high artistic aims that I object to. Art is good—so is the business Machine. But you cannot blend them in this particular way.

The truth is, that though in Vienna you will see great ladies at almost any good local concert, as likely as not sitting beside the music-mistress with whom they play duets twice a week (which proves that the traditions of Beethoven's time still linger in the Viennese great world) it most certainly is *not* in this class that you will find a genuine love of music in England.

IX

On the other hand I believe 'the common people,' who, it may be remembered, heard Christ gladly, would really love the best if given the chance—a view which was confirmed by friend after friend at the front, who told me that the men thoroughly appreciated good music; it was, alas! the officers who insisted on having the last and vulgarest ragtime or music-hall ditty.

The best English opera public I ever saw were the audiences collected in the suburbs by the Moody Manners Company; and even at Covent Garden and Drury Lane the only genuine applause, the only applause worth having, comes from the gods—a place that plays no great part in the box office. They are uneducated up there, and in some ways undiscriminating. But they do not pretend to admire music which bores them because it is the right thing to do—as happens in the aristocratic zone below—and on the whole recognise an alive thing when they see it.

Probably the best way to raise the level of musical taste all round would be to attend to the education of the rising generation, and give their minds the right twist in their youth.

But even adult taste can be trained, and, to return to my own beat, whatever function our operatic system fulfils, I do not believe in its educative value. You cannot cultivate people by rushing them at top speed through one spasm-season after another, but only by setting up something serious and permanent, in which a high standard can be struck and maintained.

Mr. Francis Toye wrote, not long ago, that he had expected to see a steady improvement in the London productions, and had hoped that they would gradually work up to the reliable level of a big German provincial Opera House, eventually touching that of Munich and Vienna—whereas nothing of the sort had occurred. How could it, say I, under our system?

And the worst of it is, that, without a standard of reference, people get to accept haphazard productions as they accept variable weather. A disillusioned enthusiast could not tell you what is wrong. Even as the victim of a bad cook ascribes his loss of appetite to dyspepsia—a notion that a week of good cooking would dispel—he probably thinks it is his own fault; that he

does not care about opera as he once did. And so to bed, without resentment. . . . But gradually the attendance slackens.

I could tell these people what is wrong. It is merely that, on the principle of working through the six weeks' *menu*, as advertised, at all costs, there has been no time for the extra rehearsal that would have put on the polish, and resulted in an easy, clean, and kindling performance.

How often, in a country where a marvellous faculty for reading at sight—the real British gift for improvisation—is supposed to dispense with the necessity of rehearsals, have I been assured that the public does not perceive *nuances*! Not consciously, perhaps, any more than when a funny story is stupidly told you realise that an opportunity has been missed. But in the one case you have been defrauded of a laugh, in the other of an artistic emotion.

No one would wish to deny that under present conditions we sometimes get splendid performances, equal to anything you could see on the Continent; to ignore the fact would be stupid and ungrateful. But before attempting to point out where, in one's humble opinion, salvation is to be found, it is a melancholy necessity to insist on the fundamental rottenness of our system, which is practically an appeal to the rich—eked out in one particular case by the unheard-of sacrifices of a great musician and enthusiast.

X

There is no doubt whatever that, ere long, we shall have subsidy in some shape or other—first in London, then elsewhere. Cultivated opinion is aware of the necessity, and the public will come to see it in time—possibly, as in the matter of conscription being

a necessary war-measure, is nearer seeing it now than many people believe.

The only question is—where should it be bestowed? How are we to get the best return for our money?

To subsidise a West-End Opera House would be a hopeless business. Even if this were the right jumping-off place, such a gigantic income would be necessary that, of course, the public would refuse to entertain the notion.

I would begin at the other end. Establish and endow an Opera House intended exclusively for the class in which, I believe, a love of good music is latent. A musical *pendant*, in short, to the beloved Old Vic., where the most expensive seats cost 3*s*. 6*d*.; which is thronged daily by a keen yet independent audience; where you can see Shakespeare played without elaborate decorations and clap-trap effects, yet holding the play-goers in a vice; a place out of which you step with a new belief in human nature, saying to yourself: 'The Real Thing!'

Probably there are not two Miss Lilian Baylis's in the world; but the tide that this particular moon drags skyward overflows the boundaries of the Old Vic. The South London soil is favourable to the right sort of seed—as the most promising operatic venture I have heard of, the Miln-Fairbairn season, proved.

And here it is, I think, that the golden rain should fall. Not in the form of a bonus—once you have got through a bonus you are as you were—but an income should be guaranteed for a term of years to the Surrey Theatre, on the continental municipal lines.

The ideal would be to put the musical management in Sir Thomas's hands, but—would he accept it? Perhaps his freedom is too dear to him; possibly he would say that he can do better work as free lance. The problem of the musical direction, however, is not

a pressing one ; no doubt there are many who would fill the post admirably.

The subsidy would have to be large enough to maintain a first-class, absolutely independent, orchestra. And the first office of the Institution—I like this continental name for it—would be to break up the vile, insincere, commercially-conceived theory (and practice) of rehearsing that prevails in England.

I would start with instrumentalists unknown to fame, who would master the music (by dint of rehearsing it) from the inside—not from the outside, as the cracks do. And I would have many women in the orchestra, because I think women more capable of devotion to an ideal than men. For ideal there must be ; through all must run the simple, warm, human element you feel so strongly at the Old Vic, and which is evidently compatible with business.

The great point is that opera should be played there continuously, unless, perhaps, for a couple of months in the summer. This in itself would alter the angle of publishing firms towards composers, put the training of dramatic singing on a sound basis, establish a new scale of fees (which are now, naturally, on a fancy level), and generally bring order and stability into a scene where all is feverishness, uncertainty, and confusion.

Next, the appointments of the theatre (a fine old house just the right size) would remain exactly as they are—comfortable enough, but not luxurious. Thus, situation and upholstery in alliance, the Surrey would be as immune from an invasion of the Smart as the Old Vic, and a moderate subsidy sufficient for its needs.

The effect of all this on the upspringing of a race of English opera writers need not be insisted on. It would be the difference between asphyxiation and fresh air—between death and life. The bare idea of it stirs creative pulses in the veins. . . . !

I know too well that the Press will not face the subsidy issue ; but ideas have a way of germinating in spite of being brushed aside as impossible. If a sober facing of the real truth, which is that every artistically conducted opera enterprise *fails* to pay, should result in our putting our house in order—now, at once, when a strangely hopeful creative impulse is stirring in many war-ravaged lands—then one would go farther even than 'the gloomy Dean' (who maintains that 'nothing fails like success'), and assert that nothing succeeds like failure ! For then various box office tragedies of which the public hears nothing, would not have happened in vain.

Meanwhile, I have no quarrel with existing enterprises, many of which are doing good work. As for Sir Thomas, who has stimulated and satisfied curiosity on a scale none but he could attempt (and certainly not a small subsidised house on its probation), who has given us the Russians, Elektra, the Rosen-Cavalier, and other things it is good and needful for us to hear, but which otherwise we might not have heard for years . . . but it seems an impertinence to speak of what we owe him.

There are many mansions in the House of Art, and I desire to destroy none of them—merely to say that the one to subsidise should be a house founded on a rock. And by 'rock' I mean a region where there is a fund of unspoiled instinct, both human and musical, to draw upon and ennoble, and which a grant would place beyond the reach of those two greatest enemies to art—the un-Heavenly Twins, Commercialism and Snobbery.

July 1920.

AN OPEN SECRET

ASSUMING that readers of these pages agree with the writer in thinking conundrums a bore unless the answer follow instantaneously, I will at once say what the secret is.

Newspaper columns are full of concert advertisements, concert-halls are engaged weeks deep, but, though no one alludes to the fact, there is a Slump in Music!

Some few years ago, in an article called 'England, Music and Women,' of which, with the kind permission of the Editor of *The English Review*, I am borrowing a few passages, I ventured to discuss the question of music in this country. The general position at that time (1916) was, that having thrown off German shackles, liquidated certain of their musical businesses, purged our orchestras of Germans, and banished contemporary German music from our programmes, a great English Renaissance was about to dawn. We lifted our eyes to the hills and descried Sir Thomas Beecham coming to our help—a millionaire, in some ways a genius, a man likely to take his own line, who had begun his career in England by giving a series of some of the most perfectly rehearsed concerts it has been my good fortune to listen to.

The main contention of that article of mine was, however, that music is a complex civilisation we once possessed, have long since lost, and that nothing but

a recovery of the state of mind whence great art springs would give it back to us. Whether our attention were turned to politics, the Church, or the Press, obviously all was not well with us, and on Marconi day even the most self-complacent realised that something we fancied an unalienable heritage had passed out of English public life. And England said much . . . and did nothing.

Now I had always held that as long as qualities of passion—enthusiasm, moral courage, sense of duty, and so forth—play no part in the national scheme it is vain to pray for the rebirth of a lost art. And as possibly nothing short of tragedy could give back to us the clean, simple things without which there can be no sound life, the outbreak of war did not seem to me the unmitigated evil it did to many.

The war is over. Every passional quality I have named was necessary to the winning of it, and in none of them was our country found lacking. Yet strange to say there is no perceptible spiritualisation in our outlook ; or if there be, it has not got into our music life.

I know few places more depressing nowadays than concert rooms, apart from their being too often half empty when the free list is suspended. Programme after programme is reeled off with scarce a semblance of fervour (even the critics, the least critical beings in the world, are beginning to notice it), and judging by appearances the audience are derelicts putting in time till something more interesting happens—a tea party perhaps, or, if it is an evening concert, bed. Of course there are exceptions, but as a rule this is the situation.

It may be partly owing to war fatigue, and I fancy another factor is the disappearance of the Germans and German Jews who, whatever their faults, really do love music and disseminated an attitude towards it that counteracted our own fundamental indifference. But I

also believe that the commercial principles we carry into everything, and which result in as many performances and as little rehearsing as possible, bring their own Nemesis. Spiritual aridity, the mead of all who industrialise sacred things, has overtaken languid performer and bored listener, and people who once cherished illusions on this subject are beginning to ask themselves whether we are a musical people—in the sense that we certainly are a sporting and an adventurous people. The exterior equipment, perhaps a heritage of the past, is there still—beautiful voices, exquisitely fine ears, and great natural technical facility; but the fire within burns low and capriciously. As Madame Blanche Marchesi once said to me: 'Les Anglais aiment assez la musique . . . *mais ils s'en passent fort bien.*'

There is no respect for music in this country, no awe, no mystery; and given the fatal genius of our orchestral players for reading at sight, and their great technical skill which enables them to skate brilliantly on the surface of their art, I see a day coming when that deep communion with the soul of a composer which is the point of rehearsing, and by which alone his message can be understood and delivered, will be considered unnecessary and beneath the dignity of an English orchestra!

Meanwhile when you listen to players who understand by the word rehearsing something more than securing a fairly smooth performance; when, for instance, a group of heaven-inspired artists to whom music is religion, such as the Bohemian Quartett, are among us—playing of course to more or less empty benches—the pang, the wild joy of it, is almost too violent for æsthetic enjoyment.

I do not say there are not *some* true musician-souls among us—souls capable of burning. But they are few in number, and if they were for ever struggling

against the prevailing inertia they would die of fatigue. Some of them have told me so . . . but I should have known it without that.

Anyone who has really gauged the dimensions of English music of the sixteenth and succeeding centuries, music as unlike Bach as Chaucer is unlike Dante, must ask himself how we came to lose this art?

Myself I think it is perhaps the price we pay for becoming the greatest colonising power the world has seen except Rome. Gradually our gaze turned to things external; we took to fashioning new material worlds and lost the knack of listening to inner voices and building edifices of sound. Again it may be the fault of industrialism, or perhaps because we have evolved by degrees into a race remarkable for reserve and understatement, which I cannot think was the hallmark of the Elizabethan Anglo-Saxon. And possibly in the course of this evolution song froze to death.

It is not my intention to enquire into causes here, only to register effects, and one of these is well worth noting, namely, that though the tax-payer has no objection to subsidising the British Museum with an income of £300,000 a year, no Minister has ever dared to ask us to subsidise music in any form. And it may be said here, for the hundred and first time, that America and ourselves are the only so-called civilised nations that have no national and subsidised Opera House.

Having treated this subject fully elsewhere I will only call attention to the fact that the general idea of a subsidy is to set up and maintain a standard of perfection such as cannot possibly be achieved when an artistic enterprise depends on gate-money alone. But the commercial principle, the one we are committed to, is found quite satisfactory by a unanimous Press. I cannot believe this is their true opinion, but, as

Mr. Delius has recently had the courage to say, music life in England is shot through and through with humbug.

The tragic part of it is that there is plenty of creative talent in our midst, but how shall it fare in a world where good new music, if native, has so little hold that there are no publishers for such music? where, after the initiatory performance (for which too the composer sometimes makes a special financial effort) there is no extra rehearsing for what is perhaps a new idiom? . . . A flash in the pan, a splash in the Press; then . . . 'Next turn, please!'

There is no standard, no stability. I have heard performances so perfunctory, scrambles-through so disgraceful, that it seemed as if the boards of the concert floor must cry out. But no one cried out in the newspapers next day. You may find all sorts of theories ventilated there; recently the musical (?) critic of an 'intellectual' weekly complained that he could not enjoy Beethoven because that composer has so little sense of form! This was stated not as a theory of the writer's, but as an incontestable fact. Yet no one carries on a campaign against *the habitual insufficiency of rehearsal.* 'After all time is money; the public won't be any the wiser' is the idea, I suppose—that is if anyone realises that it is not enough for a thing to 'go well.' But though cheap Japanese goods can be vamped up in no time, nothing on earth can replace the patient hammer-hammer that gives old lacquer its quality. Thirty years ago Tschaikovsky wrote to me, in a letter I published in my Memoirs, what he thought of our theories and practice as regards rehearsing. And we have not changed our ways—unless for the worse!

On the other hand if it is the case of a personality, some composer, conductor, or executant whom they think will be a winning horse, there are no lengths of

adulation to which our Press will not go. But for the orgy of uncritical admiration in which Sir Thomas Beecham lived, moved, and had his being, this remarkable man, whom to know is to become attached to, might have been a turning point in our history. With a quarter of the money he so generously lavished on music he might have aimed at perfection. But alas! his obsession became, on the contrary, to show with how *few* rehearsals a man of genius, served by the pick of London's instrumentalists, could turn out the maximum of operas in a given time! It was even notorious that the sport, the excitement of pulling half-prepared productions out of the fire, appealed to him, all of which indicated a lack of reverence for music that augured ill for the fruition of our hopes concerning our One Hope.

But none protested, none said: 'Wean yourself from fireworks, abjure West-End influences, be as serious and conscientious as you are gifted and generous, and help us to better things.' Finally when he, to whom Beethoven and Wagner were sealed books but who once was the supremest of Mozart conductors, was suddenly seized with the whim of conducting everything, including *Figaro* and *The Seraglio*, at such a pace that the orchestra's task was one long acrobatic feat, and the singers, unable to articulate, could only gasp and squeak, all you could find about it in the newspapers was an indulgent smile dissolved in printer's ink.

This is what I mean by having no standard. A continental audience would have howled the curtain down. And thus it comes that despite his generosity, enterprise, and brilliant gifts, I fear that his influence on music in England has on the whole been disastrous—just because he had it in his power to give it an upward lift.

Speaking as an artist, I agree with Mr. Newman and other thoughtful writers in thinking our music-life is in a very bad way—superficial, low-pulsed, and bolstered-up with make-believe. Years ago it seemed to me in want of new blood, but now, owing to the 'England for the English' battle-cry that is so pertinaciously chanted on the fields of peace, and above all on fields of art where nationality should have no voice, that avenue is barred.

The one element of hope lies, I think, in the gradual interpenetration of the life musical by women. I say this in no fanatical feminist spirit, but in all calmness, as the result of quiet and, I trust, sane observation of things in general, and of what is going on under my nose in particular. What is more, many thoughtful knowledgeable men I know are saying the same; not openly, for moral courage is, I think, the rarest virtue in the world, but in corners!

Generally speaking I find women more capable of enthusiasm and devotion, readier to spend and be spent emotionally than men—as I noticed in my dealings with stage choruses long before the war. Their nerves, too, seem nearer the surface, more responsive to appeal, less deeply buried under that habitual resistance to the emotional appeal which, as I said, is surely a post-Elizabethan trait. I cannot conceive of music being an Englishman's religion—that is, a thing pure of financial taint—but in the case of an Englishwoman I can conceive it. At this moment, too, women are the keener, the harder-working sex. All the world over men seem disinclined to put their backs into the job—war-weariness, it is called—and the responsible statesmen of Europe are unanimous in ascribing the slackness of trade in large measure to the slackness of the workers. But during the war woman *found out her powers*, glories in them now, and only asks to go on using them.

The question is, will she be allowed to do so?

As late as the autumn of 1915, when the call for her help in munition factories had been so splendidly responded to, there was still a strain of condescension in male comment on the activities of 'the ladies.' In the November of that year pressmen made a tour of the factories in order to report officially on the output, and it was discovered that in work never before done by women, demanding both skill and strength, they proved not only their equality but their superiority to men (*The Times*, November 16); also in many cases their output was rather more than double that of the men (*Manchester Guardian*, November 16).

These facts—rather a serious matter, I thought—were treated as a joke; the women were patted on the back, and patronised, and one halfpenny paper gave a picture of girl grocer-assistants, with the remark beneath it: 'These women can tie up parcels as neatly as men'—just as you would talk of performing dogs or seals!

Nowadays the tone has changed. Men have come to recognise in woman a dangerous rival, and the Unions are shouldering them out of engineering, printing, engraving, and countless other trades which they have mastered only too well; in some cases playing that useful card 'temporary substitute for fighting men,'—in others not troubling, or perhaps too honest, to play it.

But what touches me most nearly is what is happening in music. During the war it became impossible to carry on without admitting women into the orchestras, and few things more deeply impressed such as were capable of dispassionate judgment than the increased brilliance and warmth of tone. A new and refreshing spirit, too, was perceptible—in part the result, no doubt, of sex rivalry of the right sort. Well do I remember the transfiguration of a certain elderly violinist who seldom used more than half his bow, and who now was

making it bite into the strings as it had not bitten for years in honour of the extremely capable maiden who was sharing his desk. But I think the main gain was the infusion of un-warwearied feminine vitality, the 'go' of keen young talents for the first time allowed scope.

It was generous-minded Sir Henry Wood, I think, who first started mixed bathing in the sea of music, and so successful was the innovation than many other orchestras followed suit. True, the London Symphony Orchestra, much to its disadvantage, in my opinion, still remained an all-male body, except of course as regards the harp (an immemorial concession, I imagine, to æsthetic promptings . . . this solitary, daintily-clad, white-armed sample of womanhood among the black coats, as it might be a flower on a coal dump). One hoped however that in time the L.S.O. would come to see the error of its ways and that one more selfish monopoly was a thing of the past.

But now, a bolt from the blue ; it appears that the Hallé orchestra at Manchester, true to its Hun origin I suppose, has suddenly sacked its women members. Not in order to make way for fighting men whose places they had been occupying—no woman that breathes but gives way gladly in such case—but merely because of their sex !

Asked to justify this proceeding, the Committee give two reasons that remind one of the wonderful excuses put forward for opposing female suffrage—excuses so feeble, so transparently bogus, that one almost pities the gentlemen who, unequal to higher flights of invention, imagine that this sort of thing will do !

The first excuse is, that when on tour it is not always easy to find suitable hotel accommodation for 'the ladies.' Very sad—yet dramatic companies have not

yet reverted to the Elizabethan practice of entrusting women's rôles to men on that account!

But the second excuse is the supreme effort—as fine an instance of solemn pretentious humbug, in other words cant, as I have ever come across. It is in the interests of 'Unity of Style,' we are told, that the women have been shown the door!

Now will anyone bind a wet towel round his head (yes, *his* head, for only a man can expound the deeper workings of the male mind) and tell us what on earth this means? What, pray, is 'unity of style' in this sense? When Joachim and Lady Hallé played the Double Concerto in the very town whence issues this precious pronouncement, did the fathers and uncles of the members of that Committee hand in their resignation? Did Bach turn in his grave with horror (although it is his own fault for not mentioning the sex question in his score)? Do the Soprani and Alti interfere with the 'unity of style' in a chorus? Does the English Quartett, that is led by Miss Hayward, lack it?

No! You can talk of unity of style between static things, such as Italian violins, verses of a poem, houses in a street, bank clerks, priests, etc., but not in the case of a fluid force. Sex will not give it to 40 men of different talent, temperament, habit, digestions and schools; that is the conductor's office. And two first class artists of different sexes who respond subtly to his intention can more easily be welded by him into the 'unity' he wants than a first rate and a fourth rate male.

But a truce to poking about in the unsavoury dust-heap of man's disingenuous reasons for doing an ugly action. Let us rather see what that action leads to.

Apart from the more spiritual element which I know

women will bring, as performers, to the making of music, their admission on equal terms with men to our orchestras has another aspect. As I am never weary of pointing out, orchestral playing is the finest training a young composer can have, and the cheapest. The whole of musical literature passes across your desk; you are learning form and instrumentation automatically; and even though much of your time be spent in what must be the hateful work of giving lessons, you are on the crest of the wave of music, where strong breezes refresh your spirit and keep it buoyant.

Finally, to wind up with a consideration of a practical order, once you are member of a well-known orchestra, you are entitled to ask good fees for private lessons.

All this was hitherto denied to woman; no wonder the sacred flame that burned in her bosom throughout her student years too often flickered out. I have always maintained that until we are in the rough and tumble of musical life as men are, there cannot possibly be many women composers worth talking about. Competition, environment, and the sort of chance you get all round, are to talent what sunshine and the less poetical activities of the gardener are to a flower. In a word, the general level of human circumstance determines what stature one particularly gifted being can be expected to attain, and if you have to hurl yourself upwards from the sea-level you may become a Teneriffe, but improbably a Mount Everest.

Bullying and cowardice, meanness and jealousy, are not pretty qualities, and I wonder if men have a notion with what contempt women view these attempts to prevent them from earning their livelihood in any sphere for which they can prove themselves fitted? Meanwhile, as finishing touch, a certain group of young intellectuals are busy shedding crocodile's tears in any newspaper that will act as blotting paper over the paucity

of female stars of the first magnitude, *the equality of their chances with men notwithstanding!* . . .

. . . . . .

The whole English attitude towards women in fields of art is ludicrous and uncivilised. There is no sex in art. How you play the violin, paint, or compose is what matters. In countries where the æsthetic instinct is strong and cultivated—France for instance—judgment is clean and objective, and a woman who practises art is merely an artist among artists. Here, where that instinct is feeble and untrained, a critic's first and last thought in connection with her work is her sex.

I have often protested against the dragging in of this King Charles's head in connection with myself and have done so recently,[1] but the latest instance of it is too funny to remain unchronicled. A critic, whom I will not name because I believe he is a good fellow and a good musician, in writing about me as 'Dr. Smyth,' adds: 'or shall we drop that stiff, formal-sounding title?'

Why? If this gentleman can utter the prefix in the cases of Drs. Vaughan Williams and Walford Davies without shock to his nervous system, why not in mine? Whence this hankering after 'informality'? Young ladies whom he has dealings with in private life may perhaps be agreeably fluttered at so arch a frame of mind, but isn't it rather silly to give way to it in your professional capacity?

I believe Englishmen to be congenitally incapable of judging a woman's work at all. They may try, but this sex-bogey is between them and it. If Selma Lagerlöf and Anna de Noailles, whom the whole civilised world acclaims as two of the greatest living writers, had been Englishwomen, every notice about them would have carefully described them as 'among our greatest

[1] 'The Opera Fiasco.'

women 'writers'! And such men as recognised their true dimensions would keep the awful knowledge to themselves. ('The old girl's a wonder,' said Mr. Bagnet, 'but I never tell her so. *Discipline must be maintained.*')

An instance in our own literature occurs to me. 'The Irish R.M.' having notoriously girdled the globe with laughter, no man, I am glad to say, attempts to patronise that work (unless by alluding to these pages, in which an absolutely new type of humour with an illimitable background to it has been evolved and perfected, as 'Sketches'). But how many English *men* realise the staggering dimensions of these authors' supreme masterpiece 'The Real Charlotte'?

Some few dimly feel it, perhaps, but concluding that since it is the work of two women it can't be so epoch-making as all that, they confine themselves to pointing out that it is not as 'pleasant reading' as the R.M.!

As I write these lines I see on page 768 of *The Times Literary Supplement* that there is 'a vein of feminine irresponsibility' in a book by a certain Major General, and two contemporary Press cuttings praise a certain musical composition as being 'of a strength we do not expect to find in a woman's work.'

My comment on this last remark is that Art is constructive action, that no one can build without strength, and that the qualities of men and women of this breed are probably identical. Anyhow all first-line artistic or literary work by women has exactly the characteristics of remarkable women all down history. And whether names such as Caterina Sforza, S. Teresa, Catherine of Russia, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Tudor, Queen Victoria, Joan of Arc, Edith Cavell, Elsie Inglis, and Mrs. Pankhurst suggest strength, or 'feminine irresponsibility,' let man ask himself. For

he is 'quite a fair beast if he gives himself time,' as a small boy I know said of his house-master.

. . . . . .

To sum up, there is, as we have seen, a slight discrepancy between the theory and practice of men on the subject of such women as in any way compete with them for bread and butter, for honours or emoluments. Theoretically we are inferiors; practically we are, one would imagine, superiors, or at least formidable competitors, judging by the lengths men go to keep us out of the arena. For as Mrs. Besant once said, to build barriers is to show you are afraid.

Now I started by saying that as long as the public life in your country, which includes its sanctioned outlook, is unsound, there can be no artistic renaissance; I will go further, and remind my readers that when Socrates was pondering the possible regeneration and survival of Greece, one point that deeply troubled him, as containing the germ of inevitable decadence, was the attitude in the Grecian state towards women.

During the Great War it looked as if the axe had been laid to the root of a certain Prussian tree that flourished in our midst,—a determination to permit women to do such work only as man did not wish to do himself.

But I see signs of another spirit, a spirit of which the incident of the Hallé Orchestra is an illustration. Men are not only slacking themselves, but are combining to prevent women from earning their livelihood in this and that sphere, notwithstanding the fact that if prosperity is to be restored to this country, every ounce of its working power must be utilised.

I do not blame men too severely for clinging to what have hitherto been considered male monopolies; alas! it is human nature, though an ignoble part of it.

But since, as regards the questions we have been considering, it is a dangerous anachronism, there must be no meek acquiescence on our part. Whether the Grecian women had it in their power to arrest, by asserting themselves, the downward trend of civilisation that so painfully preoccupied Socrates, I do not know. But I *do* know that in resisting tyranny, jealousy, and selfishness, in refusing to take the dog-in-the-manger action of these Trades Unions lying down, we are only doing our duty to ourselves and *to our country*.

November 1920.

POSTSCRIPT

WHILE writing the above I had an opportunity of protesting from a London platform against the action of the Hallé Orchestra, and will venture to give the results of that protest.

(1) A disarmingly frank confession was elicited from Mr. Hamilton Harty that he would 'rather be attacked by women than men'! One could not refrain from replying that women players being in a minority, it *is*, no doubt, the safer policy to sacrifice them to the strong party!

(2) 'One connected with the orchestra' remarked to a Manchester reporter: 'this was always a man's show and we mean to keep it for men if we can.' A refreshingly honest individual, this!

(3) Various brilliant creatures propose men's orchestras and women's orchestras. Quite so. Why not picture galleries, dinner parties, and anything else on the same cheerful and natural lines? Why not break up the world into monasteries and convents?

(4) Official Press comment has, on the whole, been fair. Of course there is humorous allusion to Jeremiads,

bombshells, hornets' nests, and 'poor' Mr. Harty. That much the writers owe their sex! Also they tacitly ignore the simple aspect of the question as ventilated in (2) and gravely discuss it from the point of view of 'Art.' But tongues are obviously in cheeks, and none of them are comfortable about this business. Some mention names such as Suggia, Isolde Menges, Daisy Kennedy, Margaret Fairless, Marjorie Hayward, Madame Chenet, the Harrisons, etc., and doubt if this boycott can be defended; others openly condemn the injustice and cruelty of deliberately breaking the lives of two-thirds of the musical students in the country. For that is what it amounts to.

In conclusion, someone remarks that it would be interesting to learn the opinions of conductors other than Mr. Harty. Here is what Sir Henry Wood, who has had a more varied experience than any conductor in England, recently said at Brighton:

'I will never conduct an orchestra without women in the future, they do their work so well. They have great talent for the violin and wonderful delicacy of touch. They are sincere; they do not drink, and they smoke less than men. In the Queen's Hall *they have given a certain tone to our rehearsals and a different spirit to our performances.*'

That is good enough! Thanking Heaven for this champion, who says straight out what others, perhaps, feel, but have not the courage to proclaim, I think we may leave it at that.

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